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It's Your Story by Bishop Linda Rounds-Nichols



Photo by Linda/Phil

Many years ago, I had the opportunity to serve as an interim Hospice chaplain, and thus, to learn many activities those in the death and dying field felt were important. One of those was the need to help patients tell their life stories.

This practice is said to help people look at their lives as they would a movie or as reading a novel. Doing this is useful because it assists people in considering any unfinished business, with the goal of bringing resolution to relationships, situations, and even met and un-met dreams. By intentionally looking at one's life, people often are able to understand that their life had meaning.

Of course, many people find that they and others reminisce about their lives long before their last days. We've often heard the jokes about Grandma or Grandpa starting a story with the words, "When I was your age..." or "I remember...." If we're honest, many of us hear those words coming out of our mouths now!

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Presiding Bishop's Remarks



Photo by Linda/Phil

Dear Church of Antioch clergy, parishioners, and friends,
Welcome to another edition of The Voice of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch. As 2024 winds down, it's good to take a few moments to look back at some of the events of the year.

In January, Bishop Linda and I traveled to Las Cruces NM where Archbishop Kristina Rake, Presiding Bishop of the Catholic Church in Exile (formerly the American Apostolic Old Catholic Church), and I signed an Intercommunion Agreement between our respective jurisdictions. In June, Archbishop Andrew Hall, Primate of the Reformed Old Catholic Church with headquarters in Glasgow, Scotland and I also signed an Intercommunion Agreement between our jurisdictions. The Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch is an ecumenical jurisdiction that welcomes the opportunity to establish Intercommunion Agreements, seeing them as a small but important step toward healing the scandalous divide in the Catholic tradition.

While in Las Cruces in January, I also served as co-consecrator for the episcopal ordination of Bishop Lennard Panthier by Archbishop Kristina. Congratulations again to +Lennard for answering God's call. Ad multos annos!

In July, I was once again privileged to make my annual pastoral visit to St. John's in Las Cruces and worship with Fr. Ron and his community. It is always a pleasure to worship with them and learn about their various ministries and activities. Thank you, Fr. Ron, for your many years of faithful service. May your ministry continue to grow and flourish.

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Presiding Bishop's Remarks (continued)

In October, the Church gathered at Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center for our annual Convocation. The addition of an extra day gave us the opportunity to experience a day of silent retreat in addition to the presentations and other activities that we routinely enjoy. Bishop Kristina Rake served as our retreat leader, guiding us skillfully into a deeper experience of the Indwelling Christ. Joining us also was Kathryn Damiano who led us through an exploration of our Convocation Theme, “Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch – Transcend and Include”. Kathryn’s thought-provoking and insightful presentations challenged us to consider how we can create a new form of Church, a “we” space that is practice based rather than belief based, with an emphasis on ministry of presence and the reclaiming of the spirit of being / doing found in the primitive Church. Her sessions left us with much to unpack in the years ahead.

In his presentation, Bishop Theodore addressed the theme of the Incarnation as traditionally understood and as understood from a non-dual perspective. Rev. Celeste provided an informative overview of Native / First People spirituality and the ways in which it can complement the Christian experience. What a rich and nourishing gathering!

The end of October saw the bishops of the Church attend the annual in-person gathering of the Catholic Bishops Forum at the Mercy Center in St. Louis. The Forum is a gathering of independent Catholic bishops whose goal is to collaborate on common endeavors, to provide opportunities for growth in communion with each other, and to be a council to advise each other. Bishop Linda and I are members of the Board of Directors. Bishop Linda serves as secretary, and I serve as vice-president. One of the highlights of our gathering was a presentation on Public Theology by Rev. Nathan Hosler, the director of the Office of Public Witness, Church of the Brethren. More information about the Church of the Brethren can be found at <https://www.brethren.org>. If you would like more information about public theology it can be found at <https://www.jaymereaves.com/blog/2016/10/22/what-is-public-theology> and other websites.

The other highlight of our gathering was a powerful session of Theological Reflection facilitated by Bishop Kedda Keough of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion, addressing the topic: Polarization and the Election. We hope to introduce Theological Reflection to the Church at Convocation 2025, topic to be determined.

2024 also saw the addition of another chartered ministry, Hozho Ministries, led by Rev. Celeste Handy of Gallup, NM. Rev. Handy brings to her ministry her native ancestry and years of experience working with the Native American / First People of the United States. I’m excited by the addition of her ministry and look forward to the contributions it will make to the life of the Church. Welcome Hozho Ministries!

There is other news to share, so please continue to read through the rest of The Voice.

Blessings,

Presiding Bishop Mark Elliott Newman

It's Your Story (continued)

Life reviews, telling our life stories can be done throughout our lives, and it is good to do this practice because our reminiscences encourage us to reconsider what has been and is important. This practice can help us forgive ourselves and others, gain a different understanding of people and events, and see how our lives are significant and unique.

This practice can also assist us in making changes should we choose to do so. John Maxwell’s word might be that encouragement, as he wrote: “What’s the key to a life that matters? Living each day with intentionality.”² Or as said by a character in the novel, *The Collected Regrets of Clover*: The key to a good death is living a good life. (paraphrased)³

Remembering our story can be accomplished in many ways. Writing an autobiography, creating a photo album, journaling, creating an art journal, sharing with others, creating a Q&A document, and using published guides⁴ are a few suggestions. However and whenever we do this, working on a life review is

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It's Your Story (continued)

important work. It shows us that with all the ups and downs, gains and losses, joy and grief, ins and outs, we can see who we have been and who we might want to become.

We can celebrate this creature we each call “Me.”

References:

¹ Sharif, Farkhondeleh, PhD, et al. “Effectiveness of Life Review on Quality of Life in Late Life at Day Care Centers of Shiraz Iran, A Randomized controlled Trial. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5845117.

² Maxwell, John. Your Life Can Be a Great Story. <https://globalleadership.org/articles/leading-yourself/your-life-can-be-a-great-story-john-maxwell>.

³ Brammer, Mikki. The Regrets of Clover.. 2023. (audible)

⁴ One such guide is: A guide for Recalling and Telling your Life Story, available from The Hospice Foundation of American. www.hospicefoundation.org.

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Evolve

by Bishop Theodore Feldmann



Photo by Feldmann

“Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.” John 12:24

“See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the wilderness I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers.” Isaiah 43:19

“What has been passing for Christianity during these many centuries is merely a beginning, full of weaknesses and mistakes, not a full-grown Christianity springing from the spirit of Jesus.” Albert Schweitzer

Phyllis Tickle, in her book, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI), makes a solid case for the idea that we (Christians, particularly in the West) are in the midst of a major reformation, a phenomenon that she believes happens every 500 years (more or less):

- 500 years back from our own time: The Great Reformation, for which she assigns the date of October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his theses on the door of the chapel at Wittenberg.
- 500 years before that: The Great Schism, 1054, when the pope of Rome and the patriarch of Constantinople had their anathemas and bulls, the split between the Eastern and Western churches.
- 500 years before that: “The Fall of the Roman Empire,” or “The Coming of the Dark Ages,” when, in 590, Pope (Saint) Gregory I, “cleaned up,” the upheaval of his time and built it into “a kind of ecclesiastical-political coherence, building on the work of St. Benedict.”

And of course there was the great upheaval 500 years before that when Jesus was born and Christianity began to develop (circa 33 AD), the beginnings of what became a major world religion in a world already filled with religions.

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Evolve (continued)

My own observation of our times suggests to me that the late Ms. Tickle is correct. I believe that it started in the mid 1960s. The COVID pandemic hastened the process. And I believe that things are moving faster in that direction as we move further into the 21st century. The evidence is there.

As I write this, the Archdiocese of Baltimore is closing 30 churches in the city of Baltimore, all at one time! The Diocese of Buffalo is doing the same, as will Los Angeles. St. Louis has already done so. The Episcopal dioceses in Wisconsin are discussing moving from 3 dioceses to one. The Episcopal cathedrals in Wilmington, DE, and Providence, RI, have closed. Small neighborhood churches around the country are struggling or dying.

On a personal level, I felt this when the Presbyterian church where I grew up closed in 1996 and is now a Latino Assembly of God. The historic Church of the Holy Communion in New York City, where I was the organist in 1972, is now a health club. And it's not just the so called "mainline." The Pew Research Institute points out that even mega churches are losing members, particularly among the young.

I believe in evolution including the evolution of human consciousness. At our recent convocation, I took us through a series of quotes that I believe point out that religion is a necessary part of the evolution of human consciousness and it must continue to evolve to be healthy, as the great Albert Schweitzer points out in the quote at the top of the article. It darn well better! Because there are things about our current religious world that are extremely unhealthy. We find ourselves with religious institutions that are very broken. One might even say, sick. The late John McNeill, a former Jesuit, calls us to reflect on this:

"We are all called to be aware of the state of our faith, to strengthen what is healthy in it and to diminish what is sick and neurotic. We can legitimately evaluate the validity of a religious belief system by its psychological consequences. Good theology will result in good psychology and vice versa."

Science tells us that when we die, the material that makes up your body and mind is not lost - not one bit of it - but returns to the earth and is "born again." Doesn't that sound just like Ash Wednesday? We are indeed dust and to dust we shall return. But that is not the end of the story. I think that is also true of our religious heritage. It must evolve and there are aspects of it that will die in the process. But they are not lost.

Independent Catholics often suffer from what Bishop David Oliver Kling calls, "imposter syndrome," in which we are constantly comparing ourselves to the Roman Catholic Church, or, in some cases, the Anglicans. I suggest that the time has come for us all to stop doing that. We don't need to look backward quite so much, especially not for approval. We have inherited great traditions, wisdom, and apostolic succession from them. That remains with us. We cherish those things and claim them. They are part of who we are. None of it will be lost. We can, rather, look forward. Is this, on some level, what Jesus means by saying, "Let the dead bury the dead?"

While we can learn from it, are we overly concerned by and shaped by the past? Or are we doing our small part (in a new and technological age) to plant seeds for the future of an evolving, healthier, Christianity? Hiding those seeds in a pouch does no one any good. They must be planted and nurtured to bear fruit.

Reality of God's Presence by Deacon Richard Brown



Photo by Brown

In times of uncertainty, the reality of God's presence becomes even more apparent. For Christians, the God of eternal love is a beacon of hope, a steadfast anchor in the stormy seas of life. The realization that Jesus Christ is our sovereign Lord brings profound comfort and assurance. This is where I place my faith, firmly believing in the truth that God's love is eternal and unchanging. Faithful Christians respond to this divine love with the certainty and devotion presented in the Eucharist. In the sacred act of communion, we partake in the Body and Blood of Christ, a tangible expression of His enduring love. In the company of saints, I find consolation and strength, as our shared faith becomes visible and palpable through the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Through my studies and reflections, I have come to understand the pervasive connectivity of God's presence. This divine presence is not limited to specific moments or places but is woven into the very fabric of
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creation. God's knowledge encompasses all of creation, with a particular focus on humanity. For me, King David's Psalm 139 offers profound hope and comfort, especially in the face of societal adversity. The psalm beautifully articulates the intimate and all-encompassing nature of God's knowledge and presence, reminding us that we are never alone.

As I explore the depths of my own spirit through prayer and meditation, I hope to come to a profound realization of God's presence in my spiritual journey. This journey is not just a solitary endeavor, but a path illuminated by the divine light of God's love and guidance. This has been revealed to me in two significant ways. First, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, Sophia, the feminine nature of God, has been guiding, comforting, and empowering me through my spiritual pilgrimage. Second, when the Holy Spirit is present, I find reassurance and strength, knowing that God's presence is a constant source of support and guidance as I journey the path to ordination.

The recognition of the collective conscience present in the symbols of Christianity—such as the cross, the Eucharist, and Holy Baptism—serves as a bridge to sharing and realizing the spirituality of others. These symbols are not mere representations; they are profound connections to the Divine, enabling us to experience and understand the spiritual journeys of our fellow believers in a revealing and transformative way. Through this shared spirituality, we find a deeper sense of community and a more profound understanding of our faith. In this journey, hope, faith, and love become the guiding principles that lead us closer to God and to each other. As Acts 17:27-28 reminds us, "That they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'"

My seminary experience has deepened my hope, broadened my faith, and made my experience of God a much more relevant part of my life. Like a pilgrim journeying home, I have been guided by my mentor, coursework, and spiritual direction to realize the importance of both the journey and the destination. The comfort and certainty I have experienced during my path through Sophia's curriculum are evidence of God's abounding grace. Although my specific vocation is not yet clear, the unity I share with those who have a common vision will help me pray and discern a calling that will be realized and fulfilled in God's time and within God's goodness and benevolence.

Convocation

Please mark your calendars for the next Convocation of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch to be held in Phoenix, Arizona from 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."

New Bishops Elected at Convocation 2024
by Bishop Mark Newman



Photo by Linda/Phil

I am pleased to share with everyone that during the Bishops' Meeting at Convocation 2024, the bishops elected two priests for ordination to the episcopacy, both of whom have accepted the Spirit's call; Fr. Anthony Carrillo of Peoria, AZ and Fr. Benoit Moreau of Rivière-du-Loup, Quebec, Quebec, Canada.

Fr. Tony is the pastor of St. Theresa's parish, a ministry to residents in an assisted living and memory care facility in Peoria. He earned his MDiv from Sophia Divinity School in 2004 and was ordained for the National Catholic Church of North America by Bishop William Wettingfeld, then the Presiding Bishop of the NCCNA. Following Bishop Wettingfeld's death, Fr. Tony was received in the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch, with the honor and dignity of archpriest. Fr. Tony's episcopal ordination will take place on Saturday, March 01, 2025, at Faith United Methodist Church in Phoenix AZ. All are invited to attend.

Fr. Benoit completed his theological studies at Université Laval, Quebec, PQ, Canada, and was ordained to the presbyterate in 2023 by Bishops Mark and Michael. He currently serves as the pastor of Fraternité Bas St-Laurent in Rivière-du-Loup. In 2024, Fr. Benoit was named Vicar General of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch for the Province of Quebec and entrusted with the responsibility and authority to oversee the growth and development of the Church in Quebec Province. As such, in consultation with the Presiding Bishop of the Church, he was authorized to represent and speak on behalf of the Church in all matters canonical and secular. In recognition of his expanded responsibilities, Fr. Benoit was also elevated to the honor and dignity of archpriest. Upon ordination to the episcopate, he will assume the role of Regional Bishop of Canada, with responsibility for the management and growth of the Church in all of Canada. The ordination will take place on June 01, 2025, in Rivière-du-Loup, PQ. All are welcome to attend.

Congratulations Bishops-elect Tony and Benoit.
Ad multos annos!

When from Our Exile?
by Bishop Michael Talbot



Photo by Linda/Phil

How strange it is to have a memory that reaches back into my early adolescence, a memory that at the time seemed so irrelevant yet remained with me throughout my life each Advent season. You see, at the age of sixteen, I saved up my babysitting money and bought myself a stereo, but not just any stereo since it had a record player, cassette player, radio with an equalizer and two large speakers, and best of all, Pioneer made it. Now, while my 16-year-old friends bought Rock albums by Alice Cooper and Creedence Clearwater Revival, I bought albums by the St. Louis Jesuits, Br. John Michael Talbot and Carey Landry, to name a few, who were the then superstars on the contemporary catholic music scene. Well, with all that out of the way, you may be asking what this has to do with Advent and the title of this short piece, "When from Our Exile?"

When From Our Exile is an Advent song based on Psalm 126, It was likely written around 516 BC, after the Israelites returned from exile in Babylon. *When From Our Exile* was written by Dutch musicians Bernard Huijbers and Huub Oosterhuis in the 1980s. The chorus words are sung with a sense of longing and gratefulness: "When from our exile God leads us home again, we'll think we're dreaming, we'll think we're dreaming." The songwriters captured the longing and restoration by God of a people who had lost all familiar to them, but in God's love and mercy, they are brought back to the fullness of life. Verses two and three of Psalm 126 continue:

2 We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy.
And the other nations said, "What amazing things
the Lord has done for them."

3 Yes, the Lord has done amazing things for us!

What joy! (Psalm 126: 2-3 New Living Translation)

Psalm 126 expresses themes of redemption, joy, and gratitude to God. God's people were in search of a home, but every time it seemed the search was over, something happened that reminded them of their exilic state. Famine drove them to Egypt, Philistine raiders captured their cities, internal division split the kingdom,

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and ultimately, a superpower king sent them to Babylon. Out of this sadness and experience of exile, a new hope dawns for a people now settled and living under God's smile.

4 Restore our fortunes, Lord,
as streams renew the desert.

5 Those who plant in tears
will harvest with shouts of joy.

6 They weep as they go to plant their seed,
but they sing as they return with the harvest. (Psalm 126: 4-6 New Living Translation)

The theme of exile carries into the New Testament, where the apostles remind the followers of Jesus that we, too, are foreigners and strangers in this world, exiles longing for home. What's remarkable about this description is that it appears after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the One in whom all God's promises have been fulfilled. One might have thought that Jesus' coming is the end of our exile, but no. He has opened the way; he himself is the Way. And yet, we await the consummation of all things.

We are still longing for home. That's why Christians find comfort when they envision themselves soaring to heaven when they die. As the apostle Paul puts it, "To be away from the body" means we will "be present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:6-9). It's a glorious truth, but even this hope is not the end of the story. Even heaven isn't our final home.

In the two final chapters of the Book of Revelation, what do we see? Not the destruction of the physical world and our separated floating souls enjoying an endless spiritual existence on a puffy white cloud. No, we see heaven come down to earth. We see God dwell with us, Emmanuel.

The Garden of Eden, once our home but lost, is restored, this time as a city, not a garden. When all things are made new, God will open Eden once again. This is what we long for during the Advent season: for Jesus to recreate all things, for Jesus to reopen Eden, for Jesus to make this world our home restored.

Yes, it was a simple memory of an old song based on Psalm 126 that still remains in me even after 50 years. A psalm that I am understanding more deeply each year as the meaning of my Advent, remembering what God has done for us and the restoration we will come to know. Come, Lord Jesus.

Remembering CCOA's Colleague Rev. Paul R. Smith, 1937-2024

by Bishop Linda Rounds-Nichols



Photo by Linda/Phil

It seems that everyone who is a member of a family or other group, who lives in a particular place, is part of the same religion, attends the same event, or reads the same book has his or her own experience.

My experience, when reading Paul's book, *Integral Christianity: The Spirit's Call To Evolve*, was that of an enormous Ah-Ha! I found this Ah-Ha moment continued primarily throughout part one of his book. I enjoyed the rest of his writing, but it was part one that held me. It remains with me, years later.

It is in this section that Paul explains the various stages of spiritual development. He explained, "...our understanding and experience of God-develops in a series of unfolding levels." He continued with the words, "The idea of development or evolution of spiritual understanding and experience is quite different from the traditional idea of 'the faith once delivered to the saints.' It recognizes that the Spirit continues to move us along as Jesus predicted."¹ After explaining this, Paul also admonished his readers to understand that while there are different understandings and behaviors within the stages, and to understand that while knowing about these stages can be useful, they are not intended to be used for judging where people are in their journey. He then provided a detailed explanation of each of the stages. Thus, my Ah-Ha! I was able to begin to understand some of my fellow, but very different thinking than me, Christians! Paul was invited to present at the 2013 CCOA Convocation, and he was a joy!

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Paul wrote many articles and books, including, along with *Integral Christianity, Is Our God Big Enough? Close Enough? You Enough?* and *Is It Okay To Call God Mother?* He was the co-founder of Integral Christian Network², and was and will be, loved by many. He was a blessing!

¹ Smith, Paul R, *Integral Christianity: The Spirit's Call to Evolve*. 2011. – p. 4-5 and his reference John 16:12-13.

² www.integralchristiannetwork.org. Paul's teachings, as well as courses and groups are available on this site.



Rev. Paul R. Smith

Hozho Ministries
by Rev. Celeste Handy



Photo by Linda/Phil

Hozho Ministries – The Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch provides services such as weddings, funerals, baptisms, prayer and visitation for the sick, prayer services, Holy Eucharist, and other such services by the priest. Hozho Ministries also meets once a month with members and clergy both present. Other interested members of the community are welcome to attend. Business meetings focus on service to the community of Gallup and surrounding areas according to its needs. Some services are feeding and giving coats and supplies to the homeless and hungry, giving to and volunteering at the Gallup Community Pantry, and joining together with other faith groups and nonprofit groups in the community to serve a larger population more fully.

So far, Hozho Ministries has been part of serving the homeless for Thanksgiving dinner for two years, packing and handing out care packages to the homeless for Christmas last year, and giving away coats and food on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Hozho Ministries wishes to reach out to other faith groups in the community so we can get to know one another better. This is being done by joint efforts to help the needy in our community. We also visit events that other faith groups are having, such as the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration at St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church and speakers at the Homeless Church during community holidays.

We began a yearly Gratitude Service in cooperation with friends at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Westminster Presbyterian Church this year, in which all faith groups of the city were invited. We gave each group equal time to share their faith, traditions, and gratitude. By doing this we hope to bring the community together in fellowship and understanding. In addition, we plan to have at least one joint music service with as many of the groups who would like to participate. The beginning of this will be this month for Christmas. We are all very excited about this, and we are getting a reputation now for being a welcoming

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Hozho Ministries (continued)

group in the city who is eager to get to know and serve others.

We also hope to do other services for the Christian community itself. For example, we hope in the future to develop a Taizé service, help reconstruct the labyrinth at Westminster Presbyterian Church, have a book study and soup night during Lent, and provide Ash Wednesday services (provided by the priest last year). We hope to serve not only other Christians in these ways, but also to reach out to those who have felt left out or injured by religious groups and would like a place to join in again.

At present, Hozho Ministries is a small group, but much of what I have described has already been done by the group or is in process now. I feel blessed to be able to write this as our intentions as a group and what we are already doing. The group is doing everything I had hoped and intended to do when I formed Hozho Ministries, and more. I did not know that all my own intentions for the group could come so quickly. As the priest and leader of this wonderful group, I like to call them the “Small but Mighty” servants of our community.



Editor's Note: *“Hózhó is a central concept in Navajo (Diné) philosophy and worldview. It is often translated as "balance," "harmony," "beauty," or "well-being," but its meaning encompasses much more. Hózhó represents a state of being and living that aligns with the natural order of the universe, fostering harmony within oneself, one's community, and the environment.*

To live in hózhó is to live in a way that promotes positivity, health, and interconnectedness. It is deeply spiritual, influencing daily life, decision-making, and ceremonies. The pursuit of hózhó is a guiding principle in Navajo culture, symbolizing peace, resilience, and the interconnectedness of all things.” (ChatGPT, 2024)

Midnight in America...and morning is a long way off...

By Diana Butler Bass

While this was written a while ago, people in our country and the world are still holding on to strong feelings about the election, so Diana Butler Bass's comments continue to be helpful. – Bishop Linda Rounds-Nichols



Dearest Cottage friends,

This evening is painful. It seems as if Donald Trump may win the election — and do so with a larger vote than in either 2016 or 2020.

As I write, the election hasn't been called yet. But by the time we wake in the morning, it might be. History is unfolding a road of terrible uncertainties. Yes, it does seem like it is midnight in America.

But now, here, in the dark, I want you to know that if you are feeling bad or scared or angry or confused, you are not alone. I feel all of that with you. And I'm guessing that pretty close to the 55,000 other people who read the Cottage are feeling that way, too. The silence of my text messages speaks volumes — it is surely a stunned silence, a kind of communal shock.

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Midnight in America...and morning is a long way off... *(continued)*

Go slow tomorrow. I urge you to pay attention to some small beautiful things in your life. We don't need answers or a plan or even understanding right now. One friend *did* text me, "It's okay to need to catch your breath after the wind has been knocked out. It will take a bit. But we will rise."

Do that with me, okay? Breathe. Read a poem. Pray for someone who truly lives on the margins and who is even more at risk now.

We will rise. In time. The Cottage will be here as part of that. I'm here with and for you — for all the things about which I've always been passionate — mercy, love, hospitality, peace, joy, liberation, healing, faith.

It is good to write those simple words. Even when it is hard to catch my own breath. Somehow, midnight will give way. Oddly enough, I hear a lone bird singing right now. In the tree just outside my bedroom window. Singing in the dark.

Share a thought in the comments. Something honest. And maybe something kind and beautiful.

I'm more grateful for you all than ever. You are not alone.

Love, Diana

(From The Cottage, November 5, 2024, used with permission.)

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/>

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