



## Relating Discipleship and Activism

The following reflection is by Maria Teresa Davila, a Roman Catholic laywoman and Assistant Professor of Christian Ethics at Andover Newton Theological School. She is presenting at this year's Call To Action conference.

I think it's safe to say that my entire academic career has been dedicated to figuring out what makes people of faith tick - morally that is. Specifically, I am interested in exploring how people of faith in the U.S. navigate the moral landscape before them, grounded on the Christian story.

Having been deeply influenced by liberation theology and the preferential option for the poor, I wanted to know why this seemingly central dimension of Christian faith had not really borne much fruit among U.S. Christians. It is possible that I have been looking in the wrong place, there being so many people dedicated to helping the poor and marginalized in so many ways. But, truly, how many sermons have you or I heard on the option for the poor? And besides those critical pelvic issues (same-sex marriage, abortion, reproductive technologies), when do preachers extend a call for direct social action?

This November I look forward to sharing with folks at the Call to Action conference in Tennessee some of my learnings on the connections between discipleship and activism.



Without giving it all away, one of the key findings so far has been the importance of relationships. I know. It's not really rocket science. Things matter to us when we are related to them in a deeply personal way. But in order for relationships to be personal they must be incarnate, as the Divine Love became incarnate in our suffering.

Therefore, we are more likely to connect our discipleship to public witness and activism when we are spiritually and materially connected to those who suffer injustice. We are moved to take risks for others, to publicly demand for policy changes, when a migrant family that is part of our church suddenly stops coming, and we wonder whether they have been detained, deported, or trafficked. Or, we might be more

**But, truly, how many sermons have you or I heard on the option for the poor? And besides those pelvic issues (same-sex marriage, abortion, reproductive technologies), when do preachers extend a call for direct social action?**

likely to take over a blighted and abandoned home with a group that restores them to house the homeless after hearing story after story of working people whose homes were taken from them when their bank refused to re-negotiate their loan.

Most importantly, I'm looking forward to hearing from you, and I hope to provide opportunities during my workshop for us to grapple with the meaning of activism for us, where we feel called to become incarnate and take risks for the sake of others, and identify both the obstacles and the opportunities that stand before us in our journey.

Please join me in Memphis this November as we, together, explore creating countless currents of positive change in our world. I am honored to be on this journey with you.

## Letter from the Executive Director | Transformation



Despite working for an organization that is about transformation, I often resist change. I like the familiar. I like the predictable. However, I think the old adage is true: the only constant in life is change.

Transformation, or any kind of change, can be frightening. The path ahead is unknown, we are called to part ways with comfortable familiarity, and as we look to the horizon we are challenged to think in new ways to move forward.

Similarly, our work in transforming the church, while having the same spirit, is changing.

Call To Action's annual confer-

ence is connecting with different people in new locations around the United States and an increasing number of supporters are engaging with Call To Action in digital ways. Advocacy now has more of an electronic dimension to it rather than an in-person quality.

Over the next few months, Call To Action will be preparing for its strategic planning process that will give birth to a plan forward for the next five years. While our vision remains the same, the path forward will involve change that will be both challenging and exhilarating as we continue to inspire Catholics to act for justice and build inclusive communities.

This edition of **CTA News & Notes** is devoted to the various ways we're bringing change to our church and world. The upcoming tour featuring Fr. Tony Flannery reminds us that transformation of conscience is an essential ingredient to the future of our work.

Call To Action's JustChurch program is mobilizing to respond to morality clauses in church worker contracts, discrimination under the guise of religious liberty, and the continued crackdown on women religious - a shifting Catholic landscape ripe for transformation.

In her lead article, Christian ethicist Maria Teresa Davila makes clear that working for transformation is a characteristic of being Jesus' disciple. When we work for transformation, whether it is in our church or in society, we follow in the spirit of Jesus.

Guided by the Spirit, change is afoot. This gives me confidence that we can be fearless in our work together.

Sincerely,

Jim FitzGerald  
Executive Director

### Resource Spotlight

## Crisis of Catholic Authority: Faith & Power in the Diocese of Lincoln, NE

Excommunicated!

I could have never imagined this word used to describe me. Yet, this is exactly what happened because of my new bishop's extra-synodal legislation excommunicating Catholics who belong to certain organizations.

An active and engaged

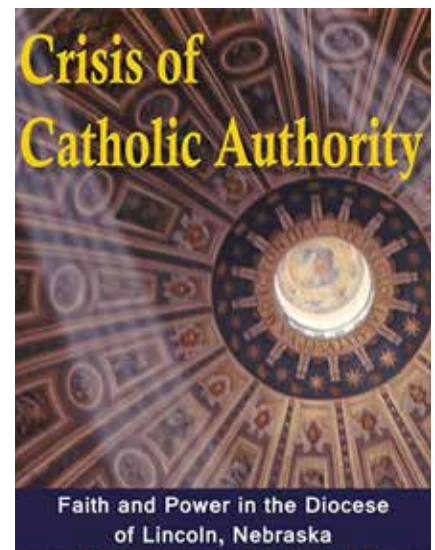
Catholic, I found myself confused as I confronted a rigid church that demanded unquestioning obedience. I felt betrayed by a church that educated me to use my mind and then punished me when I did so.

Unfortunately, what has long been the case in the

Diocese of Lincoln is spreading to other dioceses as well.

I delve into this phenomenon and recount my experience in the book, **Crisis of Catholic Authority**. I hope you'll have the opportunity to learn from my story.

- Rachel Pakora,  
Nebraska Chapter Leader



## Church Workers Stand Together

+ Ellen Euclide

When a person loses their job, it can be a devastating moment. When someone is fired unjustly for advocating for women's equality or has their job cut because a new priest doesn't believe in social justice outreach, whole communities are affected. Reaching out to a network of others who've experienced similar losses can be an important step as these workers heal and move toward the next chapter in their lives.

Church workers and former church workers have long

reached out to CTA for a community of support. This year, they've organized a monthly teleconference call to check in with one another and support the many workers who've been recently fired, often for marrying a same sex partner or supporting LGBT rights. The group is also looking forward to gathering in person at the Annual Conference in Memphis and at future CTA events.

As concerns over expanding religious exemptions, loyalty oaths, and unjust firings have touched more communities,

CTA is also connecting current workers to one another and to allies to advocate for the rights of all workers. Workers, Catholic and non-Catholic, are integral to our schools, parishes, charities and hospitals; they deserve respect and support, not fear and loyalty oaths.

If you or someone you know is employed by a Catholic school, charity, parish or hospital, give us a call to confidentially learn about the rights of workers and connect with others.

Ellen Euclide, Director of Programs, [ellen@cta-usa.org](mailto:ellen@cta-usa.org) or by calling 773.404.0004 x261.

## Gearing up for Conference & Beyond

+ Bonnie Johnson

Call To Action is proud to stand with dedicated teachers, committed nurses, devoted parish workers & others when they face challenges with the institutional church. Their stories motivate us to continue our work; they remind us what we are fighting for - an inclusive church of love!

This year at conference, the development committee has organized a silent auction in order to support our JustChurch programs and increase the

reach of our efforts. This new opportunity to give back will be a lot of fun. Highlights of the upcoming silent auction include a number of books (many of which are autographed!), gift baskets, travel packages including a Cape Cod retreat and getaway, and much more!

In addition, we are beginning to think about the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays. This year CTA is going to participate in #GivingTuesday, which follows Black

Friday, Small-Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday, and encourages people to give to charities and non-profits important to them (instead of buying more stuff!). I hope you'll consider participating in #GivingTuesday and supporting Call To Action.

I look forward to seeing everyone at this year's conference.

Together, let us create ripples for change and justice!



The first Tuesday after Thanksgiving (#GivingTuesday!) visit our website and give the gift of a CTA membership for yourself and everyone in your life. Give the gift of a more inclusive, welcoming, and loving Church!

# On Staying: Young Adult Reflects on His Faith

+ Justin Sengstock

## “So why do you stay?”

Two Saturdays ago, that question was posed to me—and to the other three members of our panel—by a gathering of women religious near Boston. They had invited us to talk about our experiences as young adult Catholics.

It wasn't a surprising question. We were all contributors to the book *Hungering and Thirsting for Justice*. We spoke from our narratives in that book: the spiritual memoirs of justice-seekers who remain in a church that, as often as not, is a stumbling block for justice-seekers.

One of my fellow panelists said she stayed because teachings about birth control, sexuality, and women are not the whole story. There is still Jesus, the sacraments, the saints, and our rich tradition of social thought, not to mention the prophetic witness of vowed religious communities like the one that invited us.

Another fellow panelist said she didn't necessarily think of herself as “staying” in any conventional sense of “staying.” My third fellow panelist said that after a lifetime of formation, she had a Catholic soul whether anybody else liked it or not.

I found elements of myself in all these answers. But I framed mine a little differently.

I said I stayed, first of all, because of faces. The faces of (much of) my family, the faces of the intentional community I lived with in college, the faces of the women I've fallen for, the face of the priest who told me that I might forget who I was but God never would, the faces of the people who have most affected me: these are Catholic faces.

In other words, the church to me is people. It can be hard to remember when the church is also a colossus that does things to you and those you care about. But it's true.

I told the sisters that for me to leave the Catholic Church would be a betrayal of these faces and stories. Now, that is purely a matter of personal discretion and individual judgment. Nothing is wrong with being non-Catholic. Nothing was wrong with my forebears who were German Lutherans, Scottish Presbyterians, and Russian Orthodox. Nothing is wrong

**I also said I stayed because of stories. My story is bound up with a larger Catholic story, which in turn is bound up with countless other stories. By remaining Catholic, I am part of Oscar Romero's story. I am part of Dorothy Day's story. I am a part of Jean Donovan's story. I am a part of the story of the Jesuit martyrs of El Salvador.**

with switching to nondenominational or Episcopalian or UCC if that's what you need. But for me, because of some intuition I freely admit I can't articulate, it would just be unthinkable disloyal.

And for several reasons—America's largely Protestant culture, the history of Western Christianity in general, and the preoccupations of a Catholic hierarchy that still takes many of its cues from the now-retired Benedict XVI—we are inclined to think of Catholicism, and of religion overall, as a set of propositions. These propositions are clear and distinct. They are to receive assent. You agree to the bylaws in order to join the club. And so the woman who is ordained a priest through RCWP, or the man who is partnered with another man, is obviously “outside the faith.” Right? I mean, let's just make it official already.

We have trouble thinking of religion and faith in a different sense, one that is less intellectual, less individualistic, and older. We have trouble thinking of it as tribe and peoplehood, as image and metaphor, as poetry and storytelling around the fire, as sacred spaces and sacred faces, as culture and formation, as a toolbox of mind and heart, as questions that never leave us.

The journalist Chris Hedges—who has his problems lately, but who is another of the faces that has influenced who I've become—is the son of an activist Presbyterian minister. He himself went to seminary at Harvard Divinity School. After Hedges' pastoral internship in a blighted Boston neighborhood convinced him of the church's impotence and hypocrisy, he dropped out of the ministry. But, as

he wrote in the book *Losing Moses on the Freeway: The 10 Commandments in America*, leaving the church did not make the church leave him:

“I decided that July night in Roxbury not to be ordained. I decided I would have nothing to do with the church. I decided I would leave the United States for Latin America, where military regimes were suppressing popular dissent and death squads were dumping corpses on the roadsides. I would write about the conflicts in Argentina and El Salvador. I would give a voice to those who battled for social and political justice. It was as close as my generation would come to fighting fascism.

I decided many things. But in my youth, inexperience and anger, I did not understand that life has a way of deciding things for us. The themes and conflicts that define our lives are often not of our own choosing. We cannot pick our demons nor our angels. The anger toward the church, anger over its hypocrisy, anger over the way it treated its ministers, especially my father, anger over the way it treated me, did not free me to think or speak in another language. The fundamental questions, those formed within me by the church, would never change. And the questions, in the end, are what define us.”

So why do I stay? Because I did not pick my faces or my stories. They picked me. They made me ask certain questions. I continue to ask those questions compulsively. And I always will.

The nuns, I believe, understood.

Justin Sengstock is a contributor to the books *“Hungering and Thirsting for Justice”* and *“An Irrepressible Hope,”* both published by ACTA in 2012. His writing has appeared online at *Young Adult Catholics*, *Catholic Majority*, *Chicago Catholic News*, and the original blog of the *Chicago Underground Library* (now *Read/Write Library*). Justin earned a B.A. in theology from *Loyola University Chicago* and is a current member of the *CTA 20/30 young adult community*.

For more young adult reflections, visit the 20/30 blog: [youngadultholics-blog.com](http://youngadultholics-blog.com)

## Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ Accepts Invitation to Receive Call To Action's 2014 Leadership Award

**Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ** has accepted the board's unanimous invitation to receive Call To Action's 2014 Leadership Award at November's conference.

Johnson is the Distinguished Professor of Theology at Fordham University in New York City. A former president of the **Catholic Theological Society of America**, the oldest and largest association of theologians in the world, she is the author of many books and articles. Her most recent work is on the wonder of creation, entitled **Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love**.

In recent years, Sr. Elizabeth's visionary work has stretched the thinking of institutional church



leaders. Several months ago, Sr. Elizabeth was singled out in the unfolding dialogue between the Vatican and the Leadership Council of Women Religious (LCWR).

Johnson's thoughtful approach encourages new and engaging ways to think about God, spirituality and the inter-

connectedness of all things. Like so many other prophets, Sr. Elizabeth offers great news of transformation to the church you and I love.

Join the Call To Action community at year's conference, November 7-9th, to thank Sr. Elizabeth personally for her prophetic witness and profound scholarship.

In addition to receiving the Leadership Award, she will give the Sunday morning keynote address.

**Don't miss the opportunity to hear one of the finest theologians of our time!**

## CATHOLIC TIPPING POINT TOUR

**Fr. Tony Flannery** is a native of Galway and member of the Redemptorist Congregation for more than 50 years. He is the founding member of the Association of Catholic Priests (ACP) in Ireland.

Fr. Tony has been ordered to remain silent and forbidden to minister as a priest because of his refusal to sign a document that violates his conscience; namely, that women cannot be priests and that he accepts all Church stances on contraception, homosexuality, and refusal of the sacraments to people in second relationships.

After a year during which he attempted to come to some

accommodation with the Vatican without success, he has decided to take a public stance on the need for reform in the Church.

Fr. Tony will tour the U.S. this fall from October 22 - November 18, 2014, visiting 18 cities and speaking with Catholic laity and leadership on topics of women in the Church, the future of ministry, the problem with infallibility, and the sexual teachings of the Catholic Church.

Rather than remain silent, Fr. Tony and all people of conscience are ready for dialogue!

**For tour details, visit: [cta-usa.org/tipping-point-tour](http://cta-usa.org/tipping-point-tour)**

### Fall 2014 Tour Dates & Cities

10/22 DC
10/23 Baltimore
10/24 Philadelphia
10/25 NYC
10/26 Providence
10/28 Boston
10/29 Syracuse
11/1 Cleveland
11/2 Detroit
11/4 Minneapolis
11/6 Memphis, CTA Conference
11/10 Sarasota
11/12 San Antonio
11/13 St Louis
11/15 Phoenix
11/16 Sacramento
11/18 Portland
11/19 Seattle

# Seeking Justice, Speaking Up

+ John Noble

**“For what else shall we pray?”**

Father stretched out his arms, inviting the congregation to share their petitions. This was it: the only part of Mass in our parish that allows individuals other than the priest or lector to speak. My prayer lingered on the tip of my tongue:

For an end to police brutality and racism in Ferguson, Missouri and around our country, let us pray.

I hesitated. Taking a deep breath, I decided that I would let someone else say their prayer before I said mine. I sat, fidgeting in silence, awaiting someone else's words. Surely there would be enough-

“For all of these things, we pray.”

I had missed my window. My hesitation had prevented me from speaking the words I knew needed to be spoken to our overwhelmingly white congregation. At that moment, I felt less like the Gospel's Canaanite woman defying societal norms to speak out and more like Peter, denying what he knew to be true.

Although my silence came with shame, it also came with a recognition. Due to my identity as a white, straight, cisgender man, I am afforded the privilege of silence without personal consequence. My personal silence was also symptomatic of a greater silence: that of the Catholic Church and of my fellow white Catholics on the issue of race. For centuries, and still today, our church has been bound up in the forces of institutional racism and white supremacy.

The Catholic Church's history on slavery has been contradictory and confusing, rife with hundreds of years of both condemnations of and “justifications” for enslavement. In fact, it was not until 1965 that the Catholic Church condemned slavery as intrinsically evil. According to prominent Black and Womanist theologians, the Church's reputation in the Civil Rights movement was equally disappointing. As womanist theologian Dr. M. Shawn Copeland points out in *America Magazine*, “the Catholic Church in the United States, as an institution, had a marginal effect on the civil rights movement”.

The effects of the American Catholic Church's disturbing and deadly racial history still ring true today. According

to the USCCB, less than 3% of active American bishops are Black, and only 2/3 of these bishops are the head of a diocese. Black people make up more than 13% of the American population, but only 4% of the American Catholic population. American Black priests and women religious make up less than 1% of their respective populations.

These statistics and facts just scratch the surface of our Church's troubling racial history and reality, and they are not coincidence. They are evidence of the fact that the Catholic Church is entangled in American structural racism and white privilege. And the progressive Catholic movement doesn't get a pass here. Although I've seen wonderful intentional work done around the issue of race in many progressive faith communities, we remain overwhelmingly (and often exclusively) white.

So, what can my fellow white Catholics do about these issues, especially in light of the killing of Michael Brown and Ferguson protests?

**Although I am no expert in the field of racial justice, here are just a few ideas from scholars, activists and friends that I have worked to apply in my own life.**

**Listen to people of color.** Stop “white-splaining” issues, acknowledge your own privilege and make a conscious effort to hear, understand, and most importantly, to change.

**Become familiar with womanist and mujerista theology** (M. Shawn Copeland, Diana Hayes, and Ada Maria Isasi Diaz are excellent starting points). Recognize your church's and your own role in racism, and work to celebrate the Black and Latino/a Catholic experience and implement theologies of racial liberation in your faith communities.

**Acknowledge that Black and Brown lives matter.** Speak out against police brutality in communities of color and the murder of unarmed Black people, especially when it's difficult or uncomfortable.



**Address intersectionality.** Learn and talk about the disproportionate levels of violence and harassment that trans\* women of color face.

**Do something.** Read articles on becoming a white ally. Attend a rally in solidarity with the Ferguson protestors. Start productive conversations in your social networks, churches, schools and workplaces about race.

**Stop hesitating.** Be not afraid. Refuse to be silent.

For information on Call To Action's anti-racism initiatives, visit:  
<http://cta-usa.org/focus-areas/racial-justice/>

John Noble is a sophomore at Drake University in Des Moines, IA studying Rhetoric and Law, Politics and Society. He is active in feminist and intersectional justice activism in his communities, and a member of Drake's Student Activists for Gender Equality, Voice of Choice, Campus Power Network and Progressive Alternative Christian Experience. He is interested in the connections between secular and religious progressive activism, liberation theology, and interfaith activism. John is a part of the Des Moines Intentional Eucharistic Community and the CTA 20/30 young adult community.

# Call To Action Calendar

**Saturday, October 4** 8:30am-4pm

## Jamie Manson: Why I Remain Catholic

DoubleTree Hotel, **Baltimore, MD**

Keynote speaker Jamie Manson will address the question: "Why I Remain Catholic?." Attendees will engage in table talk to respond to the same question. In the afternoon session the documentary "Before God: We Are All Family" will be presented by Lisbeth Melendez Rivera. (Attendance fee is \$20; scholarships are available.)

**Saturday, October 4** 9am-3:00pm

## Fr. Donald Cozzens: Life in the Underground

Northway Christian Church, **Dallas, TX**

"Life in the Underground: Reflection from a Secular Priest" by Fr Donald Cozzens, a priest and writer of two award-winning books, "Sacred Silence: Denial and the Crisis in the Church" and "The Changing Face of the Priesthood."

**Sunday, October 10 - October 12**

## Nancy Sylvester: Inspired by Spirit, Motivated by Justice

Kearns Spirituality Center, **Allison Park, PA**

"Inspired by Spirit, Motivated by Justice" retreat Co-Sponsored by Call To Action, PA, Association of Pgh Priests, Pgh area Pax Christi & Thomas Merton Center

**Sunday, October 12** 10am-6pm

## Catholic Parents Who Have LGBT Family

Prospect Park United Methodist Church, **Minneapolis, MN**

Fall Retreat for Catholic Parents who have GLBT family members.

**Sunday, October 12** 5pm-8pm

## Dignity Twin Cities 40th Anniversary

22 Orlin Ave SE, **Minneapolis, MN**

Join us for Mass at 5:00pm followed by dinner and a brief program of Dignity's history.

**Saturday, October 18** 9am-4:30pm

To view **COMPLETE** event details & submit items, visit the **Call To Action calendar online:** [cta-usa.org/calendar](http://cta-usa.org/calendar)

## Nonviolence Workshop: Reforming Catholic Church

Maple Grove United Methodist Church, **Columbus, OH**

Co-sponsored by Voices Speaking, Call To Action Columbus, Association for the Rights of Catholics, American Catholic Council, FutureChurch and CTA of Northwest Ohio.

**Saturday, October 18** 10am-4:00pm

## Dr. Dennis O'Brien & Others: Day of Contemplation

Weston Priory, **Weston, VT**

Concerned Catholics of Vermont (CCOVT) is sponsoring this day of reflection and dialog on the state of the Catholic Church in Vermont with a particular focus on organizing a call for a diocesan synod once a new bishop is appointed and installed.

**Saturday, October 18** 9am-3pm

## Where Love & Justice Meet: CTA Minnesota Fall Conference

Hennepin United Methodist Church, **Minneapolis, MN**

Sr Fran Ferder, PhD & Fr John Heagle, MA, JCL  
Where Love and Justice Meet: An Emerging Sexual Ethic for Our Time

**Sunday, October 19** 2pm-3:30pm

## Perfectae Caritatis: Decree on the Adaptation & Renewal of Religious Life

Gethsemane Lutheran Church, **San Diego, CA**

This panel discussion continues the San Diego chapter's celebration of the 50th anniversary of Vatican II. Panelists Donna Alioto and Carol Stech (chapter members formerly OSF) and Fran Snider and Liz Mahoney, IHM from LA will describe how their orders studied Perfectae Caritatis and executed quite different implementations of renewal of religious life.

**Sunday, October 19** 5pm- 6:15pm CST

## Webinar: Vocation & Experience of Single People

Online

Register: [cta-usa.org/families-webinars](http://cta-usa.org/families-webinars)

**Saturday, October 25**

## Conference Call With Chapter Leaders

A one-hour call among chapter leaders and CTA-USA staff liaison. Updates, issue discussions and logistics.

For more information contact Bob Heineman at [HeinemanCTA@cta-usa.org](mailto:HeinemanCTA@cta-usa.org)

**Monday, October 27** 6:30pm-7:30pm

## Commonweal Conversations: 90th Anniversary

Chelsea Piers, **New York, NY**

**Friday, November 7 - Sunday, November 9**

## 2014 Call To Action Conference

Cook Convention Center, **Memphis, TN**

Join us for the annual CTA conference, complete with keynote speakers, prayer sessions, workshops, presentations, and exhibits.

Register online: [cta-usa.org/conference](http://cta-usa.org/conference)

**Wednesday, November 19** 7pm-9pm

## Homelessness in Columbus, OH

Maple Grove UMC, **Columbus, OH**

**Saturday, November 29**

## Conference Call With Chapter Leaders

A one-hour call among chapter leaders and CTA-USA staff liaison. Updates, issue discussions and logistics.

For more information contact Bob Heineman at [HeinemanCTA@cta-usa.org](mailto:HeinemanCTA@cta-usa.org).



# CALL TO ACTION

Inspire Catholics, Transform Church

# News & Notes



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If you've changed your mailing or email address, phone number or other primary contact information, please let us know so we can keep in touch.

Changes can be emailed to [edits@cta-usa.org](mailto:edits@cta-usa.org)

Thank you for your assistance in keeping our records current.