



Shut Out, But Not Silenced

I had the honor this past September of working with the Equally Blessed pilgrims as they journeyed to Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families (WMF). These lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex (LGBTQI) Catholic families bravely bore witness to a vision of Church in which all are welcome, loved, and embraced for the experiences and gifts they offer the Catholic community.

It is deeply disappointing the larger community gathered there was not afforded the same opportunity to engage and explore with these pilgrims, too. They were dismissed from giving workshops, rejected from having a presence in the exhibit hall, relegated to a Methodist church across the street, and nearly shut out of the one presentation on “same-sex” attraction.

Therein lies the disconnect. As beautiful imagery and messages of Pope Francis adorned the streets and the convention halls – “have the courage to be happy,” read one sign, “love is the measure of faith,” read another – rigid ideology on the ground stamped out authentic dialogue and genuine encounter. If you toed the line, you were in. We were out.

Francis wants us on the margins, anyway. In the field house of the Catholic Church and the world. On the front lines. So while we were



LGBTQI Catholic Pilgrims Give Witness at the 2015 World Meeting of Families

rarely given the resources and access to fully dialogue with our fellow Catholics, it was necessary we were there. The pilgrims' prophetic ministry was not in what they were able to say, but in who they were able to be – their whole and holy, complete and healthy selves – amidst a backdrop of hierarchical control tactics and fear.

Make no mistake, Catholics noticed. Most embraced their pilgrim brothers and sisters in faith. From the numerous moments of “we’re with you!” to the emotional conversations about their own family members who identify as LGBTQI, they wanted more. They wanted openness. They wanted safe spaces to delve into these types of Catholic family realities. And while they didn't get it within the World Meeting of Families program, they found openness, honesty, and authenticity amongst

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their interactions with the pilgrims. It served, I think, as hope and refuge for many. A glimpse of what Gospel Church is all about.

Shepherd One's wheels by now have long touched down back in Vatican City. For us, we must ask ourselves what the U.S. Church will take away from Pope Francis' visit. “What about you?” Pope Francis asked us this week. What about us? Will this be a moment of transformation for our domestic Church or will we continue to be stymied in discontent and discord? Pope Francis has taken his leave-taking. It's now up to us. All of us. Heeding the words and example of Pope Francis, the pilgrims, bold and faithful, are leading the way. You can choose transformation, too.

This article appeared in the National Catholic Reporter shortly after the World Meeting of Families. Authored by Ryan Hoffmann, Director of Communications.

Learn more about the WMF pilgrimage online at: www.cta-usa.org/w-m-f

Letter from the Executive Director | Transition & Transformation



This year, Call To Action celebrates its 40th anniversary! Sr. Joan Chittister once remarked that anniversaries are important milestones because they remind us to recommit to our promises made in the past with a bold declaration that we meant what we said.

In 1976, Catholics from around the country gathered in Detroit to dream together as a community about the direction the Catholic Church in the United States should go in order to be more faithful to the Gospels. During the year ahead, we'll recommit ourselves to that visionary work as we reinvent CTA. This winter will conclude an exciting strategic envisioning process that will offer a

roadmap to CTA's future.

While the spirit of CTA will remain unchanged, the landscape in which we work, the issues we take on, and the strategies we employ to further justice in our Church and world are changing faster and are more complex than ever before.

As CTA prepares for reinvention, it is essential that transformation happen with a "blank slate" that allows for the freedom to be innovative. As my contract as CTA's Executive Director comes to a close on April 1st, I will vacate this position to prepare for new executive leadership of Call To Action. Call To Action's Vision Council is already developing a transition plan to take effect in April that will ensure a smooth transition to new executive leadership.

This edition of CTA's *JustChurch Update* will also provide important information on the final steps in completing CTA's Vision Council, the organization's governing body which already has representation from

various leadership groups. The final phase will describe the process that will surface four additional council members to be selected by CTA's at-large membership.

In addition, this edition also touches upon emerging issues of inclusivity and justice as well as report on the long term work of Call To Action's programs and activities. This issue pays special attention to the transgender experience and how faithful Catholics can create spaces that are welcoming and affirming.

2016 promises to be an exciting year of transformation! By year's end we will - together - birth a new Call To Action.

With anticipation,

Jim FitzGerald
Executive Director

Richard Rohr, OFM to Keynote at 2016 Call To Action Conference



Fr. Richard Rohr is a globally recognized ecumenical teacher bearing witness to the universal awakening within Christian mysticism and the Perennial Tradition. He is a Franciscan priest of the New Mexico Province and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Fr. Richard's teaching is grounded in the Franciscan alternative orthodoxy—practices of contemplation and self-emptying, expressing itself in radical compassion, particularly for the socially marginalized.

Fr. Richard is the author of numerous books, including *Everything Belongs*, *Adam's Return*, *The Naked Now*, *Breathing Under Water*, *Falling Upward*, *Immortal Diamond*, and *Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi*.

SAVE THE DATE

November 11-13



Albuquerque, NM

JustChurch Update | Marci Madary, Director of Programs

Advocating for Church Worker Justice is an important initiative for Call To Action. This past year, we promoted justice and provided support for Church Workers in a variety of crucial ways:

- At the 2015 Call To Action Conference in Milwaukee, a *Church Worker Declaration* was affirmed by all those in attendance. Written by five people who have worked for the Catholic Church, the document declares that all Church workers should not be fired because who they are or whom they love.
- A *Church Worker petition* for individuals to sign to show their support of Church Workers was started and continues to collect names.
- Call To Action members and supporters were encouraged to send an electronic *Thanksgiving Thank You cards* to those who work in their parishes, schools, and health care systems.
- Aaron Bianco, Program Associate, offers a *listening ear and counsel* to Church Workers who have been fired or are worried that they will be fired.

Additionally, the Call To Action community engaged other issues as well, most notably:

- In October, Megan Graves, John Nobel, and Sister Pat Lehey, OP, presented *"How to be a Catholic Ally in the Era of Blacklivesmatter."* They did an excellent job sharing their

knowledge and experience.

- In December I shared insights and information on *"How Mary, Mary, and the other Mary Inform Women's Issues Today."* Participants were engaged and asked thoughtful questions and offered powerful wisdom.

We're excited about what's on the horizon, too! Upcoming programs include:

- In late January Aaron Bianco will lead *"A Discussion on the Catholic Church's Teaching on the Primacy of Conscience."* The Webinar will be held Thursday, January 28 at 7:00pm central. Register for webinars online at: www.cta-usa.org/webinars.
- In April, Sr. Kate Kuenstler, PHJC, a canon lawyer, will offer her expertise to clarify what rights those who work for the Catholic Church have and what rights they don't have. This Webinar will be held on Tuesday, April 26 at 7:00pm central. More information will be forthcoming later this spring.

Additionally, for those who hunger for intellectual engagement and in-depth understanding of reform in the Catholic Church, Call To Action is offering a mini-course on *"Dimensions and Dynamics of Church Reform."* This 6-week online format will allow anyone across the country to participate. The classes will begin at 7:00pm and end at 8:30pm central. The specific dates, topics, and instructors for each week are:

- February 9: *Reform Throughout the Ages* with Aaron Bianco, STD
- February 16: *Jesus the Reformer* with Emily Dykman, D. Min.
- February 23: *To Reform or Not to Reform* with MT Davila, Ph.D.
- March 8: *Called to be Church: Called to Reform* with Robert Ludwig, Ph.D.
- March 15: *Spirituality of Reform* with Kimberly Lynmore, D. Min.
- March 22: *Organizing for Justice* with Melissa Browning, Ph.D. This is a unique opportunity to learn from some of the best pastoral scholars and theologians. I hope you will join us!

While it seems like a long way off, mark your calendars because Call To Action is planning a pilgrimage for March 2017: *"Women of Rome and Beyond."* This will be a great opportunity to enjoy Italy, learn about women leaders in the Church in the context of early Catholic Church, and build community with fellow Call To Action members and supporters. To be contacted once the itinerary and costs are available, visit www.cta-usa.org/pilgrimage or call 773-404-0004.

The JustChurch Program includes initiatives in the areas of racial justice, women's equality, LGBT justice, lay empowerment, & church worker justice.

Get the latest JUSTCHURCH updates on the JUSTCHURCH blog!

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For complete media coverage, visit: www.cta-usa.org/media-center

Open Letter to Church Officials Calls for Racial Justice

In 2003 Archbishop Harry Flynn of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis courageously confronted the realities of racism in his Pastoral Letter, *"In God's Image: Pastoral Letter on Racism."* In the Preface he writes, "...our God is a God of love and justice, a God who made all of us in His image. Racism is a denial of that fact. It is an offense against God. I realize that the subject of race can be a very difficult one for all of us. Yet, I am convinced that we must address it with honesty and courage for it remains a significant and sinful reality in our midst."

I read these words for the first time just a few days before Jamar Clark was murdered by two Minneapolis police officers. Jamar was unarmed and many witnesses said he was hand-cuffed when he was shot. After Jamar was killed and during the subsequent weeks of protests and occupation of the 4th Police Precinct, we at the Minneapolis Catholic Worker poured hours of energy and time maintaining a presence at the occupation and trying to be helpful to the incredible Black Lives Matter Minneapolis leadership. Over the eighteen days of near-constant protest, members of our community were arrested in an act of peaceful civil disobedience on Interstate 94, maced and beaten with clubs by police.

For many in our mostly white community, these were our first experiences witnessing at close range the violence baked into the American police system. During these weeks of protest, we glimpsed the police violence almost exclusively shouldered by people of color and poor people both at the 4th Precinct protests and on any given day in

Minneapolis.

During this time of intensity and near constant worry, I relied heavily on prayer and my Catholic faith. I found solace and strength in remembering Jesus' life of loving civil disobedience and the Catholic emphasis on an incarnational worldview, one that sees God's love embedded in creation. My faith fueled my activism I found myself searching for other Catholics active in these important anti-racism protests. I was happy to see members of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and several Jesuit novices at the protests. But I found myself also looking toward the Archdiocese, the local embodiment of the institutional Church, for words of encouragement, solidarity, or support. After all, many other religious institutions released powerful public statements standing in solidarity with the #Justice4Jamar protests. Why wouldn't the Archdiocese—with its rich history of anti-racism sentiment exemplified within Archbishop Flynn's pastoral letter—take a stand against the racist system that killed Jamar Clark? Surely a Church so rooted in a message of unconditional love and dedicated to a "pro-life" identity could not remain silent in the face of such cold-blooded, state-sanctioned murder. Unfortunately, over the month of protest I was left wanting in any show of solidarity from the Archdiocese.

My heart breaks in the midst of such apathy from my Church in regards to this important and necessary human rights movement. For the St. Paul/Minneapolis Archdiocese to maintain its current state of silence around the murder of Jamar Clark is to consent to what

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Archbishop Flynn calls "an offense against God".

I urge Archbishop Hebda and the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis to release a public statement that both condemns the murder of Jamar Clark by the Minneapolis Police Department and acknowledges the systemic racism deeply embedded in our state. This racism creates a racial disparity gap in Minnesota that is one of the worst in the nation. It is indeed a social sin that our faith tradition compels us to eradicate. Such a statement from the Archdiocese could move hundreds of thousands of white Minnesotan Catholics to deeper discernment about how we both enact and benefit from systemic racism, and how we can embody Jesus' message of social justice in confronting this aberration of God's creation. I believe it's their moral and holy obligation to use their position of power and privilege within the Church to encourage Minnesotan Catholics to boldly confront the realities of racism.

We are in the midst of a racial justice social movement similar in scale and importance to what took shape in the American South in the 1960's. I, and many other Catholics I know, will work tirelessly to ensure our Church plays a positive role in what is unfolding. I hope you will join us.

Joe Kruse works with The Minneapolis Catholic Worker/Rye House Community.

Coming Out As a Transgender Catholic

Coming out as a transgender Catholic wasn't something I would have ever predicted. I wasn't raised in the Catholic faith, so even when I was little and knew that my gender identity did not align with the gender assigned to me at birth, I didn't know what it meant to be Catholic. But as I grew older, I was slowly beginning to understand and process my own identity. Through this time and in college I learned a lot about social justice. I found out what it was like to be a servant to others while navigating what it meant to be me.

After a lot of discernment and going through the RCIA program, I officially decided to become Catholic during my sophomore year of college. I received all three initial sacraments and became a part of an incredible community at the Catholic Student Center at Washington University. This community has been a big part of my faith, grounding me in my relationship with God. I fully believe that I was made in God's image, that God has always known that I am transgender, and that my decision to transition is me growing into who God made me to be.

After college I applied to the Loretto Volunteer Program. I was hesitant because I had just started my transition. I knew the program's stance on the welcome and inclusion of those in the LGBTQI community. In early 2014, the Loretto Volunteer program received an award from Call to Action because of its diversity, welcome, and inclusion of all people. It was this award and commitment that led me to apply. Like any other job or organization the program couldn't guarantee that other individuals entering the program would be just as welcoming and inclusive.



Thankfully, my fears of encountering a Catholic community that did not seek to understand and be inclusive never turned into a reality. I was accepted and treated as if nothing was different, and in reality there isn't. Unfortunately, however, the stigma and stereotypes that surround the transgender community is what lies behind a majority of the violence and discrimination that transgender people face today.

Yet, it was during my time in the program where I learned the most about being Catholic. The Catholic faith asks us to be involved and engaged in the world around us. It asks us to listen to and speak with those on the margins who may need our loving embrace.

One of the most common questions I am still asked today is "Why do you identify with a faith that actively seeks to exclude minority groups?" This question, I am sure, resonates with many of you. Truthfully, this is something

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that I often still ask myself. However, the feeling of community and peace I receive as a part of my faith is something that I would find almost impossible to replace if I left. Also, it's because of my Catholic faith that I have some of the most incredible people in my life today. In fact, Catholics themselves are some of the most supportive and accepting of my transgender identity.

As our communities approach the year of mercy, it is my hope that more of our Catholic communities can become as inclusive and supportive as the ones I have been blessed to find. To embody the radical love and inclusion of Jesus in the world today - a love that left no one out no matter who they were - undergirds all we can do together as a community rooted in faith and justice.

Nick is currently living in St. Louis and working as an early childhood educator.



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Young Adult Leaders Added to 20/30 Leadership

Heather Wilson currently lives in San Jose, CA and works as a Policy Aide for the Santa Clara County Government. Her policy areas include social services, supportive housing for homeless, and healthcare for vulnerable populations. She provides policy guidance on all public health, housing, and constituent concerns.

She has participated in Catholic ministry since she was in grade school and helped found a Young Adult Group in San Diego, CA in 2012.

She holds a Master's in Public Administration

from University of New Mexico and a Bachelors of Arts in Organizational Studies from Pitzer College.

Jordan Graf resides in New Haven, CT where he is pursuing the Master of Arts in Religion with a concentration in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Yale Divinity School. He graduated with a B.A. in Philosophy and English/Creative Writing from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN in 2014.

While a seminarian for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rockford,

IL, Jordan bore direct witness to the institutional hierarchy's systematic disregard for the voices of the laity, the exclusion of women, and the vilification of LGBTQI folks.

Engaging issues of ecclesiastical justice like church workers' rights, women's equality, and LGBTQI sacramental inclusion, he is devoted to a critical deconstruction of traditional theology too often deployed to effect the marginalization and exclusion of the people of God.

Welcome aboard, Heather and Jordan!



RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Full of Grace: A New Year of Life for Your Baby - And for You!

Former Call To Action staff member, Claire Noonan, has a new book out that focuses on the gift and grace of motherhood. A summary of Full of Grace: A New Year of Life for Your Baby - And for You! is below:

Developmental milestones. Mothers watch them throughout that first year of their babies lives; waiting, observing, fretting, sometimes comparing, and always wondering. This marvelous book focuses on these critical markers, and offers reflections, suggestions for spiritual practices, and encouragement for all new moms, whether they are brand new to motherhood or seasoned veterans. Speaking mom-to-mom, Claire Noonan's engaging reflections offer motherly insight, hope, and trust in the God who brings all of us new and eternal life.

Noonan's book is available on Amazon.com and other major book retailers throughout the United States.

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Call To Action Invites Vision Council Nominations

As part of Call To Action's transition from a traditional Board of Directors to the new Vision Council, CTA has committed itself to more inclusive, consensus-driven decision-making processes.

The goal of this transition is to create a strong, diverse governing body that is representative of CTA's membership and will lead the community to fulfill its mission, vision, and core beliefs.

To attain that goal, the outgoing board of directors determined that Vision Council members would be selected as follows:

- Two members selected by the 20/30 Young Adult leadership community
 - Two members selected by Chapter leadership community
 - Two members selected by the Antiracism team
 - Five members selected by discernment and consensus by sitting Vision Council members, based on needed skill sets and traits (strength, compassion, diplomacy, etc.)
 - Four members selected by the general membership.
- This past June, the six leadership group representatives and five

members selected by members of the former board began their service, and the Board of Directors was officially disbanded. The first order of business of the new Vision Council has been to create a process for the selection of four Vision Council members by the general membership of CTA.

After much deliberation and discernment, we have come to agree that attempting to engage the entire membership in a consensus-building process to select the last four Vision Council members would greatly delay their addition to the Vision Council, depriving CTA members, especially those not affiliated with chapters, of representation for too long. To this end, we have created the following process which we believe balances the need for all voices to be heard with the need for expediency:

- Nominations will be accepted through *March 11, 2016*. Members may nominate themselves or others by submitting a completed nomination form, either by mail or electronically. All questions on the form must be answered.
- From *March 12-31*, the Vision Council and leadership groups will review the nominations and contact

nominees with any questions. Nominees must, by consensus of the Vision Council, Chapter Leaders, 20/30 Leadership, and Antiracism Team, be able and willing to meet the expectations of a Vision Council member in order to move forward for consideration by the general membership.

- In *early April*, the names of nominees, along with condensed biographies including background information and demonstration of commitment to CTA's mission, vision, and core beliefs, will be shared via mail and electronic media with all known CTA members. Voting will be conducted online and via mail with each member allowed to vote once and ranking their top four candidates. The deadline for voting will be *May 13*.

- Votes will be tabulated and new members notified and announced by *May 31*.

To view Vision Council expectations and submit a nomination, please visit www.cta-usa.org/visioncouncil. To request a printed nomination form, email nominations@cta-usa.org or call (484) 222-0422.

COMMEMORATIVE CALENDAR TO CELEBRATE 40 YEARS!

Help us celebrate 40 years of Call To Action! We are creating a commemorative 2017 photo calendar which celebrates our favorite moments cultivating a more just and loving church.

Send us your favorite photos from Call To Action events over the last 40 years. You can submit your photos by email at: 40years@cta-usa.org or mail at: 2135 W Roscoe St # 1N, Chicago, IL 60618 attn: Sophie Vodvarka.

Please identify the following information in the photos: name, date, and event. Photos are due July 1, 2016.



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JustChurch Update

WINTER 2016

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