

2015

TOGETHER SHARING CHRIST SUMMER/FALL

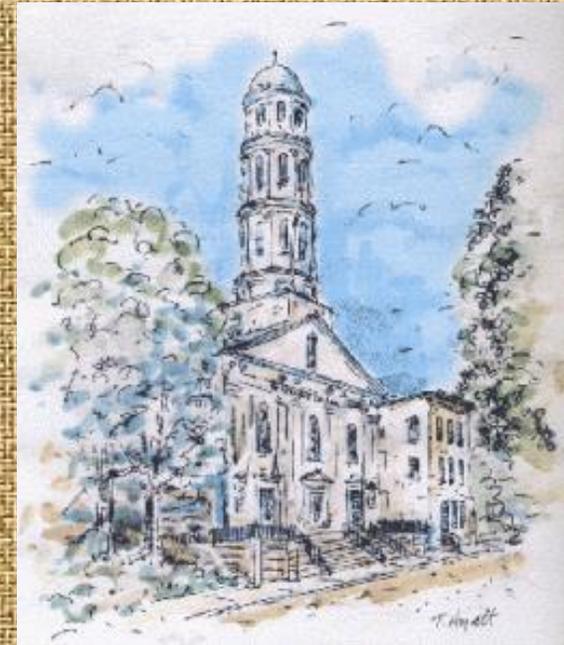
IN THIS ISSUE:

As Labor Day arrives and children return to school, Fall is not far away. On the horizon are new things. Our lecture series on the Pope's Encyclical *Laudato Si* is one major thing which will bring thought and reflection to that document. Though there are not articles on it in this issue, the speakers and times are listed in this issue. In addition, this issue reflects on:

- Chris's Resignation
- The End of Time
- Baltimore City
- The Nuremberg Trials
- An experience of the St. Vincent's Park
- Kieran Ruppert's Ministry

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Letter from the Pastor

August 28, 2015

Shalom!

By now, as I write this, and surely by the time you read this, everybody knows that our pastoral associate, Chris McCullough, is leaving his position effective Tuesday, September 15. All of us will miss him. His gentleness, friendliness, and openness have been a significant addition to our staff. He created many projects for us and with us, such as the Advent booklets, the Lenten film series, and the Good Friday children's service, that are real additions to our parish life and that need to be continued.

I have discussed his pending departure with him on more than one occasion, and I have tried to persuade him to stay. I have been unsuccessful. I hesitate to read his mind for you, and do not claim that what follows is as accurate or as comprehensive an answer as you could get from him in a one-on-one conversation about this matter. Still, I think I owe you as the parish family my best understanding of why it is that I could not persuade him to stay.

When we began the search that led to his selection, our idea was that the person selected would serve for two years as pastoral associate, after which I would step down from the pastorate to a position such as senior priest, and that the pastoral associate would then be promoted to pastoral life director. During the three years of the process, however, the Archdiocese's attitude toward the office of pastoral life director changed. When I went to discuss my stepping down, I was told that I needed to either retire altogether or to remain as pastor. Should I retire, another priest would be appointed as pastor. Should I remain, I could make adjustments to staff roles, and to my own hours, but must retain the ultimate authority and responsibility of the pastor.

Under these conditions, I chose not to retire. I tried, both in theory and in practice, to delegate as much authority to Chris as I felt I could under the circumstances. I accepted decisions that I would not have made, even on important matters such as budgeting and staff configuration. I worked with administrative procedures that I would not have created, such as weekly staff meetings. Chris, from his side, made many concessions to my style and way of doing things, accepting not a few things that were not the way he would have done them. In short, we tried to work together. Both of us. We really tried.

But one thing finally stood in our way that we could not get around. Chris felt that the authority promised him when he was hired would never be complete unless he had final say over hiring and firing of staff. I felt that this was one of pastoral responsibilities that I could not give up and still tell the Archbishop with a straight face that I was continuing to exercise the role of pastor.

In sum, the role that I felt was the largest that I could give him was in his mind so much smaller than the role that he felt he had been promised that he could no longer give the job his heart. Which for him made it a matter of integrity: if you cannot give your heart to a job, you have no right to the job. You have to respect a man who makes a decision on a basis like that, whether you agree with his decision or not.

So where do we go from here? If any of you have an idea that will change his mind and heart, feel free to talk to him. But I doubt that you will have any more success than I did. So: we miss him. We remember all the things he did for us, and try to make sure that at least the best and most important of them do not die with his departure.

And we move on. Just as after a death in the family, we stop to mourn, but then we move on. We readjust roles, we reorganize schedules, we each take on new duties, and we move on.

The staff, the parish council and I have already begun thinking about how we reorganize. Should we hire another pastoral associate, with approximately the same roles and duties as Chris has had? Or do we re-divide responsibilities, modify staff definitions, and design one full-time or several part-time positions to supplement the existing staff?

What are the areas of our parish life that Chris was most involved in and therefore most need to be kept in mind in any realignment of duties? For instance, Chris has played a critical role in facilitating our ministry to young families with small children. How do we make sure that that concern does not get lost in the shuffle? This is only one example. There are others. We need to list them and make sure they are all properly cared for.

In addition to our re-thinking process, we still have all the usual ministries to carry on: celebrating the liturgy, teaching the children, feeding the poor, and so on. Our call to be a Community of Word, Sacrament and Service does not take time off while we grieve and reorganize. In addition to which, we have a number of specific projects that need to be worked on this year, such as our implementation of *Laudato Si'*, our participation in the Archdiocesan parish planning process (which seems now to be beginning in earnest), our planning for our 175th anniversary next year, our creation of a new parish data base, and a whole list of other things that call for the attention of our community.

And in all of this, we need to continue to pray and to work together. I need to ask everyone to help. Can you reassure someone who deeply misses Chris? Can you help by taking on a job in one of the ministries he led? For instance, who wants to take leadership of the Advent booklet this year? Can you step up and take on a role with one of the committees? Would you be willing to plan liturgies, tend gardens, or give out food? If you are in doubt about our needs for help, ask any staff or parish council member, who will be happy to help you find the right spot for you.

Remember, God is always with us, and is good news for us in bad times as well as good, in hard times as well as easy.

Peace and Love,

Dick

Pastor

A FARWELL TO ST. V'S

BY CHRIS MCCULLOUGH

Some people were not present at Mass on the Sunday, August 8th when I delivered the news of my resignation. I wanted everyone who did not get to hear it from me, the chance to know what I said. And so what follows is the text from that announcement.

“Four years and one week ago, I began my ministry at St. V’s. Wide-eyed and eager to begin, I full heartedly dove into this community that I felt deeply called to serve. Over those four years I have come to know many of you quite well and worked shoulder to shoulder with you on different projects and in different ministries. Those four years have been a great and blessed journey of service for me.

Despite the goodness these four years, the day-to-day reality of the job has evolved differently than what was first envisioned. As a result of that, I have come to the decision to resign my position here at St. V’s as Pastoral Associate. This has not been an easy decision for me to make. I have been in discernment about this for a long time. I began discerning at the beginning of Lent and by the end of the Easter season, I had come to understand that it was time for me to go. It is not a decision I made lightly. I had hoped the sabbatical time would provide a needed break in the action and a chance to collect my thoughts -to further assess what I had come to understand. But by the end of that month, I had only confirmed my sense of the need for my departure.

This is a sad moment for me. I will miss all of you, you who have provided for me one of the greatest graces in my ministerial life, to work among you and to serve you. I am grateful to Fr. Dick who has afforded me the unique and unusual opportunity to minister to you homiletically.

I will be staying on in my position until Fr. Dick returns from his vacation. My last day will be September 15th. I will be working during the remaining portion of my time to finish the current projects I am working on and hand on the ministerial responsibilities I have over to Fr. Dick and the rest of the staff. Parish Council will be discussing the next steps going forward at their upcoming meeting on Tuesday.

I would be happy to talk to any of you individually, as you may desire. I will continue to hold you in prayer and ask for your prayers for me. I wish you all the best.”

I do wish you all the best. In my leaving I am aware of what a fantastic community and place of worship St. V is. St. V’s ministers to many who would otherwise have no spiritual home. As I grieve leaving, I place my faith in the fact that God is in charge here, and that out of this pain and mourning, God’s grace will prevail and bring new life. We may not know or see what God’s will is for us or where we are going, but I believe in God’s providential care for this parish and the people within. What I do know is that St. V’s is a wonderful place with a vibrant life of worship. It has been here for nearly 175 years and will continue into the future. This place is blessed with the grace of God.

My heart is with you all, even though my presence is not.

... TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

ANNE MAURA ENGLISH

As the liturgical year builds to its finale, one theme it suggests is a reflection on this line from the creed. That is the focus of this article.

“Life is not fair.” That has been the human experience for untold millennia. And yet despite learning that lesson over and over and over again, we humans have not become reconciled to the idea. Our experience of pain and injustice continues to provoke anger and outrage. There seems to be a bedrock conviction deep in the human spirit that this is not meant to be so, that we are meant for more than this.



Understandably then, Israel’s developing theology of God imaged God as One Who would right these wrongs. The God they came to know as One of compassionate love, of righteousness, of genuine concern for the human community could do no less. One way of resolving the unavoidable conclusion that the balance was not always restored in “this” life was the emergence of belief in an afterlife where the balance could be righted, (although this never became a “required” tenet Judaism’s faith). Christian faith in the resurrection, however, placed this firmly in the creed; Jesus would one day “judge the living and the dead.”

In all biblical and theological developments, human perception and understanding of God’s revelation are inevitably clothed in the cultural images and language that are available to us. This belief is no different. Despite Jesus’ attempts to overturn a culture of patriarchy and hierarchy—“It is not to be so among you”—both kept their chokehold. In addition, as Christianity moved into the rigidly legalistic worlds of Rome and of the European tribes, the image of Christ or God as judge unavoidably took on the aura of what judgment meant in those cultures. For many if not most Christians, the biblical insistence that “God is love” lost ground to the image of the all-powerful, all-knowing Judge. That same cultural legalism went to work on the theology of sin. The result was fear—even terror—of what judgment would mean for me the individual.

During the last century Christian thought has taken definite steps toward recovering (discovering?) that God is in fact love. If this development is in fact the work of the Holy Spirit, then genuine love, not some concept of a formal, dispassionate love, must take priority in and be the starting point of any concept of God. How does that factor into the image of One who “judges the living and the dead”?

For me, a possible answer has come not in theology but, surprisingly, in a story found in popular fiction. Before looking at that, perhaps a return to that deep outrage and anger in the human heart can provide a starting point. What would allay that outrage? What is it we want? Are those feelings in anyway revelatory? That is, do we experience this outrage precisely because the disparity between what is and what should be conflicts with the grace-engendered sensitivity to God deep within us?

The immediate answer does not seem to help much. Often we want revenge, we want to crush, we want to see the unjust one suffer—preferably horrendously. We are fortunate if we stop at “an eye for an eye” rather than let our

blood lust snowball into road rage writ large. But then there's the nagging memory of some Jesus statements in the gospels. How to reconcile the two?

The desire to choose the blood lust option often focuses on the need for "closure" expressed in media interviews with families of the victims of violent crime. However, some interviews after a perpetrator has been sentenced reveal another issue. The perpetrator has been sentenced. The family expresses no dissatisfaction with that sentence. They don't feel he or she "got off easy." But what they choose to comment on is that he "showed no remorse." And it is evident that this gnaws at them.

Our own experience may reflect this on a small scale. Most of us experience a huge difference between a formal or obligatory "apology" and a sincere one. Even a genuine apology, however, can leave us feeling somewhat frustrated. That happens when, although the person is obviously sorry they hurt us, they still don't understand *why* we were hurt. They "just don't get it."

What is it we really want? Whether what has been done is a crime or a personal hurt, we seem to long for others to truly understand, from the inside, what the experience of pain was like. We want them "to get it" and to judge themselves from the perspective of the one who was hurt.

How might that give us an image of a God Who facilitates true justice rather than a deity just interested in carrying out sentences of fire and brimstone? A number of years ago, I read a fantasy novel in Marian Zimmer Bradley's *Darkover* series. A brutal husband has succeeded in finding the wife who has escaped and hidden from him. The ESP power common to protagonists in the series becomes her defense weapon. She is able, not only to activate his memory of every woman he has brutalized and violated, but to force him to experience the pain, the horror, of each of them. Since it is a mental and emotional experience, this takes only a few hours. When he emerges from it his hair has turned completely white and, more importantly, he is a changed man, fully understanding and taking responsibility for his actions, horrified and repentant at what he has done.

I cannot help wondering if this may give a clue to what "judgment" truly is. We humans are so very good at defense mechanisms, rationalizations, justifications of what we do. Then there is our general obtuseness: we too are "none so blind as those who will not see." How devastating—but also how healing—would it be to truly comprehend what our sinfulness has cost others—and ourselves?

It seems to me that this perspective has the potential to blend judgment and mercy. If God is unlocking for me all the hidden moments buried in my memory (and enabling me to see them in their full reality), then I would be able to see as well the bountiful, grace-filled working of that God in my life. The two become inseparable. Part of the agony of facing my own sinful actions would lie in perceiving how they rejected the outreach of the divine Loving One who from moment to moment called me to live by God's own life. As the poet Whittier said, "Of all sad words . . . the saddest are these, 'It might have been.'" At the same time, a clear memory of my entire life might become an invitation to rejoice in and respond fully to God's personal love. I would have to realize that owning my own sinfulness is not something I do apart from God but with and in God as a way to enter more fully to union with that God.

For me, thinking about "being judged" in this way is a far greater call to ongoing, clear-eyed examination of my life and to repentance than I ever experienced by believing God would someday "get me for that." And I find it a much more fruitful way to celebrate the liturgical year's focus on the grand finale of the meaning and goal of human life.

“THE GREATEST CITY IN AMERICA”

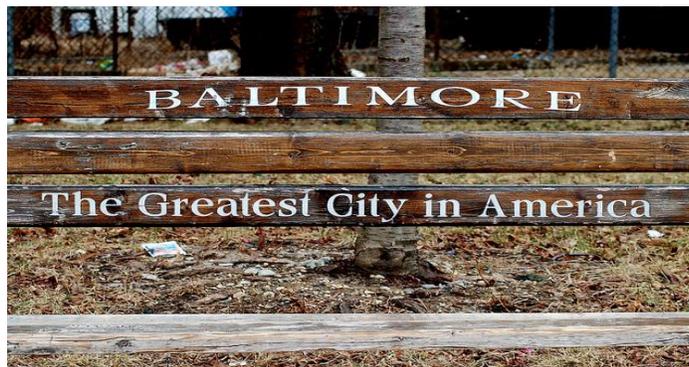
BY KIERAN RUPPERT

As far as years to live in Baltimore go, I feel like I picked a real doozy. I was here to see Ray Rice’s suspension, the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Star-Spangled Banner, the Orioles’ downright decent 2014 post-season and parts of the city burn as a reaction to a complex intersection of long-term racism and class divides exacerbated by state sanctioned violence against citizens. It has been a fun and formative year.

That’s right; my article here is yet another bit of noise in the cacophony of people talking about the social unrest in Baltimore who should really just learn when to keep their mouths shut and their fingers off the keyboard. But here we are. Talking about the rioting without talking about the long-term abuses of power and where they came from is generally a waste of time, so let’s make sure we hit on that before moving on.

The riots did not happen in a vacuum of context. There have been years of the police, their power without proper constraints, leading up to this. This is not to say that rioting was a good reaction, but given the options of voting for people who ignore peaceful protests and requests that the state stop oppressing folks or joining the mob that is rushing into CVS to do what the police are there to stop you from doing, I can see why some people went for the latter. And of course, this is a gross oversimplification.

There is the fact that burning the CVS on North Ave. is not likely to inspire folks who have money to invest it in that area. There are the people who did work at that CVS who are presumably not better off without a place to work. But again, given the options



of wasting your time by working within the system as the police continue disproportionate racial harassment and wasting time by lashing out against the system through rioting, at least you get some free stuff and a feeling that you subverted the system that works against you by rioting.

But the really interesting thing to look at is not the rioting itself; it is how we move forward. We can collectively give ourselves a pat on the back for just how many people went out Tuesday to clean up the mess that was made on Monday. Baltimore is not only made up of hoodlums who take advantage of the tragedy of systemic racism and Freddie Gray to get what they can at CVS; it is a city of honorable citizens who will clean up after those who make messes. This was a good thing. The hard part is to not see the riot as a bad thing and the clean up as a good thing and to assume the scales have been balanced.

The difficult thing now is to look at what policies the police department has that inherently lead to the oppression of poor and black people. As an example, some discussion of how to less than 30% of Baltimore officers live in the city limits and how that could make them look like an occupying force and how to change these numbers could be helpful. Marching for a vaguely defined notion of justice is nice, but focusing on specific problems and how to maybe resolve them is useful. Or maybe it will be a waste of time just as every march for justice has been, but hey, maybe let’s give it a shot.

And we have inevitably reached the point where I make this about our Park. The important work to be done both in the city and the Park is not work that can be done quickly. We cannot labor to reform the police department and then be any less vigilant about the department's state sanctioned abuse of power a year from now. Similarly, opposition to building permanent supportive housing in our Park does not help acknowledge the dignity every person deserves if it is not followed up with action.



The best action I can imagine without everyone taking a year off to be the Jesuit Volunteer at St. Vincent would be talking to the folks in the Park. That could mean regularly coming to Mass a half hour early to get to know some folks. It is not necessarily about bringing food, though I would imagine that could not hurt.

The important action is not giving out money or food out of pity; it is getting to know people in the Park as you would anyone else. We are to make it clear through interactions, as often as is reasonably possible, that all are welcome into our church. Maybe this is a way of seeing Christ as the stranger just outside our church and welcoming him in so we can better know him. This is one way we can work for social justice on our church property so we may see Christ more clearly and he can move closer to us. It is not a single grand event, but over time those may not be necessary anyway.

FLURRIES

BY BARBARA BOWELS

One late April day
Reminiscent of winter
Flurries fill the air
White and pink surprises swirl
Petals puddling beneath trees

One late August day
Reminiscent of childhood
Flurries stir the air
Butterflies moving en masse
Gentle harbingers of change

One late in life day
Reminiscent of boldness
Flurries cleanse the air
Free flowing future freshens
Rekindles inspiration

One late end of day
Reminiscent of weakness
Flurries cloud the air
Personal hurries, worries
Obstinate old oppressors

One late holy day
Reminiscent of moonglow
Flurries light the air
Soulful illumination
Benign and beneficial

TOWARD A THEOLOGY AFTER NUREMBERG

ANNE MAURA ENGLISH



November 20 of this year marks the 70th anniversary of the opening of the first and most well-known of the military trials following the defeat of Nazi Germany. From 20 November 1945 until 1 October 1946, twenty-three of the most important political and military leaders of the Third Reich were called to answer for their actions.

The Nazi attempted extermination of the Jews, “the Holocaust” as it is now called, was an event of such magnitude that it has occasioned a major disruption in theology—both Jewish and Christian. It left a number of religious thinkers in both faiths calling into question the their

understanding of God, of human community, of ethical responsibility. Out of wrestling with these issue has come a distinctive branch of theology termed “Theology after the Holocaust.”

As noted above, in 1945 many of the perpetrators of the Holocaust were put on trial in Nuremburg. A chilling refrain of those trials was the defense argument which has come to be called “the Nuremburg defense”: “I was only following orders.”

Unlike the impact on theological issues of Holocaust itself, Nuremburg has occasioned no similar blow to entrenched beliefs about “obedience” and “authority.” That in itself is amazing. The atrocities of the Holocaust could call into question basic concepts of God but not convictions about the nature of power and control. Is it more important to humans to keep the latter intact?

Ethical reflection on the echoes of Nuremburg has focused on an individual’s responsibility to defy an unjust order, no matter the consequences to self. If one looks at the way dissent is handled among believers both in secular and religious structures, however, it seems obvious these structures reserve to themselves the right to determine which orders are unjust. Where broader concerns are raised, they typically focus on the “abuse of power.” This phrase presupposes that power itself is good—or at least neutral—and that it is only when some ill-defined line is crossed that it becomes a force for evil.

Such a distinction begs the questions raised in the shadow of Nuremburg. What is there about power itself that allows that line to be crossed? What is it about power itself that enables it to bring about such atrocities? The failure to raise such questions makes it easy to overlook two facets in the human lust for power: the insidious nature with which it subverts attempts to limit it and the way it spawns and feeds other moral evil.

The “signs of the times” in the United States provide ample illustrations of the first. The U.S., the poster child for the democratic process, is experiencing new lows in the ways in which money, the communication media, and perhaps most crucially the intransigent refusal to enter into dialogue can undermine that process. In those areas of civil life where ordered discipline is crucial to operation, attempts to balance force with transparency and objective critique have had limited success. The failures of police, the medical establishment, and the military to truly partner with civilian review boards and to honor their own self-policing policies have fostered suspicion and distrust and have led to violence in the streets, an avalanche of medical malpractice suits, and calls to move military sexual assault cases to civilian courts.

Within Catholicism dramatic changes have flowed from Vatican II's questioning of the Church's fundamental assertions and practices regarding the Bible, liturgical and sacramental life, its relationship to other faiths and Christian denominations, its involvement in secular justice issues. Only the Council's challenge to the Church's understanding and implementation of its own power structure has remained unheeded.

However, what Francis, the bishop of Rome as he has requested to be called, terms the "pathology of power" affects more than organizational structures. Francis has joined his voice to the litany of papal leaders who have condemned capitalism. But what fuels capitalism? Granted there may be a few bona fide pathological misers out there who amass wealth just so they can count it. The overwhelming majority, however, revel in the control and influence wealth brings. Discrimination and rejection of "the other": again there is a rush of power to be experienced in perceiving a superiority to those who are different. And taking *Laudanti si* seriously requires not only questioning capitalistic influence but humanity's entitlement to dominate nature.

And still, Nuremberg's opportunity to view the inherent evil at the heart of power itself has remained largely ignored. Only feminist thought and theology has seriously questioned the entire framework of power and the multiple ways it infects human life. Women's religious congregations in the U.S. alone have shown a willingness to develop post-Vatican II organizational structures that aim at genuine leadership *and* genuine communal input and accountability. Both, of course have been widely trivialized or vehemently attacked.

Current theological reflection on God may open another chance to take advantage of this missed opportunity. Justification for the wielding of power has traditionally rested on a belief that this mirrors the divine activity of an Almighty God. A theology of God is emerging, however, which gives priority to mutual relationality at the heart of trinity and therefore love as the primary attribute of God, and which—in the wake of serious reflection on the implications of evolution—sees God as enabling and *empowering* rather than dictating and ordering. If human persons are called to live in the image of God and God does not exercise power as control, how can human exercise of power be defined theologically?

One answer may lie in further reflection on evolution. For theology what makes humans human is the offer of the divine self-gift. When a species has evolved to the point where it is capable of receiving and responding to this gift, humanity has arrived. From that point on, evolution is subject to human free choice. What if acceptance of the promise of evolution, full response to the divine call necessitated humans' choosing to transcend their animal origins in significant ways? Three of these ways could be the ability to accept diversity, to choose to be open to and welcome the future, and—for the theme of this essay—to organize in ways reflecting their divine image. For animals to work together they need a queen bee or an alpha male. For humans, there was another, a God-imagined choice. Was human refusal to move beyond its animal traits the genuine, historical "original sin"? Have believers missed a significant revelation in ignoring the Hebrew meaning of the word "obedience," namely "deep listening"?

Does Nuremberg have the potential to expose the innately, in theological terms the "intrinsically" evil, nature of all human dominating? As such it does not "become" sinful only when exercised by a recognizable despot. It is inherently evil in the actions of a benevolent dictator, a wildly popular elected or ecclesiastical official, or a jovial paterfamilias. A theology after Nuremberg might lead us to see that the demand for unquestioning compliance has by definition the capacity to incarnate the demonic.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PARK

THOMAS O'DONNELL

Michael Kelly agreed to circulate to the Friends of St. Vincent Park an e-mail exchange with Thomas O'Donnell, a young Jesuit from Minnesota, who decided to undertake a homelessness pilgrimage across America and ended up spending time in our Park. Here is the recap he sent:

"I've just been on the best trip of my life. It started out with a prayer for the grace to live on the streets with the homeless in the most poverty stricken regions of the United States, and the grace to advocate for them in ways that lifted me out of my comfort zone. This prayer resulted in me purchasing a one-way bus ticket to Camden, NJ, a place I think few people would expect to begin the best trip of their lives.

I arrived in Camden with no predetermined plans, save for my plan to be with the homeless. This made for a nerve racking bus ride over but, beneath the nerves, I felt peace with the (seeming) ambiguity of my trip. I attribute that to an underlying trust that God would protect me. I believe that deep trust has been growing in me since our 30 day Spiritual Exercises in January.

And that trust was instantly rewarded. I was very hungry when I arrived in Camden and, upon leaving the bus station, I happened to walk by a soup kitchen that was serving its daily meal. In line for this meal, I made my first new friend on the trip when one of the guests introduced himself to me. Kev, as he called himself, was a good man who happened to suffer from a severe drug addiction that caused him to be homeless. I would find his welcoming nature to be a recurring personality trait among many of the homeless I'd encounter over the next month.

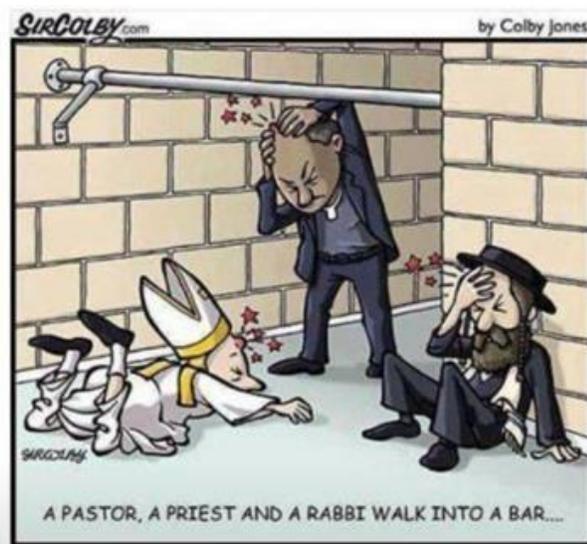
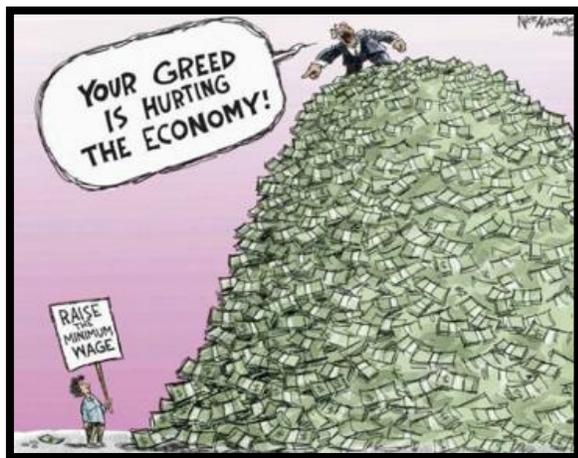
After Camden I moved on to Baltimore. There I was blessed to live on the streets of the east and west neighborhoods, two parts of the city that have a long history of severe poverty. During the protests that followed the death of Freddie Gray, I found myself able to interact with the people of these neighborhoods from a unique perspective: as a man who appeared homeless and therefore within the same socioeconomic class as the people of these neighborhoods, I was treated as an equal. I have found that there is a strong barrier between the poor and the rest of society that digs much deeper than the color of skin. In fact, my skin color was never an issue during these protests. Below the surface anger about racism, there seemed to stem a denser anger about the inequality that the poor have been subjected to since the first Baltimore riots in the late 60's.

During the final week of my stay in Baltimore, I lived in St. Vincent's park with a group of 30 or so homeless men and women. I recall entering into "defense mode" upon my first night in this park. But over the week that ensued I found, to my surprise, that the people there greatly cherished the opportunity to welcome a new visitor. When I returned to the park each evening, I'd often be greeted with an extra sandwich or meal that one of the other visitors had to spare. I could also count on a few friendly faces to say hello or stop by for a conversation. I even got to hold a prayer session one night with one of the visitors who was interested in my background! One homeless man, whom I came to greatly respect, even (insistently) gave me 20 dollars to help me along my journey. His action reminded me very much of the poor widow in Mark 12. During my pilgrimage I gratefully received help from many people who generously gave out of their surplus. But he, like the widow in Mark's gospel, gave out of his poverty. I can attest from my visit that there are some truly blessed people staying in St. Vincent's park.

So where does all this leave me going forward? My pilgrimage, and specifically my stay in St. Vincent's park, has given me a much more accurate depiction of who the homeless are. I know in my heart that they are people loved by God. Prior to this trip, I may have said as much, but I was unable to shrug an internal presumption that homeless

people always had some secret objective. If they were kind to me, I thought, it was because they wanted my money. If they looked depressed, I presumed it was part of an act to beg more effectively. But I've learned that many of the homeless are kind even when they know you have nothing to offer them. They are kind because they are human. Many of my new friends are also depressed, but not as part of an act. They are depressed because they are living with posttraumatic stress, or because they suffer from a mental illness, or because they are stuck with a drug or alcohol addiction that they cannot possibly shake while living in the environment that they do; and often all of the above.

I have come to greatly appreciate parishes like St. Vincent's in Baltimore that offer temporary relief for the homeless and provide them a place to embrace the communal environment they will need in order to get back on their feet. I have also come to greatly appreciate the impact of programs that focus on the next step; the long-term solutions to help those suffering from the numerous causes of depression I previously mentioned. Programs like Helping Up Mission and Christopher Place in Baltimore, both of which provide a one-year program for homeless men in which they are able to live in a shelter with daily meals, are able to get clean (through the assistance of experts), obtain important legal documents (such as state id's and drivers licenses), get a job, and eventually get their own apartment. Programs like these are truly effective not only in getting people off the streets, but in improving the quality of life for these homeless men, women, and families who are desperately crying out for God's help."



POETRY

BY BARBARA BOWELS

SOMETIMES

Sometimes
Sunlight splats
Down
Startles
Brightness blinds

Sometimes
Insight clasps
Hard
Alerts
To newness

Sometimes
Splats and clasps
Turn
Alter
Perception

Sometimes
Sunlight calms
Soothes
Allows
Resilience

Sometimes
Insight floods
Pours
Cascades
Remixes

Sometimes
Calms and floods
Hail
Welcome
Kindred souls



WILTING

Without fresh water
Plants withdraw within themselves
Gradually droop

Leaf color soon fades
Holding moisture in reserve
Scarcely maintaining

Lacking stamina
The permanent wilting point
Moves life beyond hope

Rain showers become
Even in vast quantities
Too little, too late

Prompt, consistent care
Cultivates lush foliage
Nurtures healthy growth



FAREWELL TO ST. V'S JVC VOLUNTEER

BY LAUREEN BRUNELLI

This weekend (Aug. 3) is our last Sunday liturgy with Kieran Ruppert, St. Vincent's social action coordinator and a Jesuit Volunteer Corps member. Kieran, who graduated from University of California, Berkeley, in May of 2014 began work with us last August for a one-year placement.

In that time, Kieran has answered the rectory door to dozens and dozens of people in need. And while St. Vincent does not have the resources to directly aid all who seek help, Kieran developed a list of area resources to assist them in locating what they need. This comprehensive list of everything from food pantries and eviction aid to assistance for stranded travelers and utility help is a valuable resource that he leaves for us.

He has worked in St. Vincent's Park to help the park's residents and visitors with needs such as food, housing and clothing. But perhaps more importantly, he has also gotten to know the people in our park. And in being there to listen, he has been able to provide the parish an enormous amount of information that will help us better minister to the people who come to our park.

Kieran has helped at all St. Vincent's service ministries. Every Monday morning he distributed groceries at our food pantry. And every Friday evening he served at our dinner. Once a month he worked in the clothing ministry to distribute clothes. And nearly every week he help our volunteers with The Resource Exchange (TRE) deliver furniture and household goods to the homes of people who were once homeless.



The youth of the parish got to know Kieran as he worked with our high school Faith Fun Fellowship group, often talking to them about social justice issues. And last week he worked with the middle schoolers in Vacation Bible School.

Kieran has spent the year living in community with four other JVC volunteers in a rowhouse in the Remington neighborhood. These five recent grads from all over the country have given so much to Baltimore, working 40 hours a week at non-profits around the Baltimore area, including Beans & Bread, Cristo Rey High School, Public Justice Center and the Don Miller House.

Thanks to Kieran to all the JVC volunteers!

LAUDATO SI' ENCYCLICAL SPEAKER SERIES

For the fall St. Vincent is developing plans for a three-part speaker series to delve more deeply into Pope Francis's encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. We have lined up our three speakers, all of whom are distinguished professors who have written about faith and the environment.

- **7:00-8:30 PM, Wednesday, September 30** – Stephen Scharper, University of Toronto
- **7:00-8:30 PM, Wednesday, October 14** – Jack Haught, Georgetown University
- **7:00-8:30 PM, Wednesday, October 28** – Mary Evelyn, Tucker Yale University

The first event will look at the science of the encyclical; the second the theology and the third the actions we must take as a global and local community. This will be a large event aimed at bring new folks to St. V and at spreading the message that Pope Francis so eloquently put forth in his encyclical.

ICH GLAUBE AN ALLES NOCH NIE GESAGTE

BY RAINER MARIA RILKE

I believe in all that has never yet been spoken.
I want to free what waits within me
So that what no one has dared to wish for

May for once spring clear
Without my contriving.

If this is arrogant, God, forgive me,
But this is what I need to say.
May what I do flow from me like a river,
No forcing and no holing back,
The way it is with children

Then in these swelling and ebbing currents,
These deepening tides moving out, returning,

Streaming through widening channels
Into the open sea.

I, 12

From Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God
Translated by Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CHURCH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

AUGUST 11, 2015 MINUTES

Pastor's Report/Council discussion and planning:

Chris McCullough, Pastoral Associate, has announced his planned resignation (for September 15, 2015). Consideration of this concern took up much of the meeting.

After inviting the Council to discuss the issue, Fr Lawrence gave some details on the Archdiocesan planning process and some of the expectations around parish leadership staffing.

Council members raised a number of questions; there was discussion around each. Fr Lawrence supplied answers to many questions as recorded below. There was input on Chris' hiring process from members of the search committee who were present (Mark, Jim, Colleen), and other answers as noted; I didn't attempt to note every members' comments by name.

Was our proposal - to hire a Pastoral Associate (PA) who would move eventually into a Pastoral Life Director (PLD) position - accepted by the Archdiocese?

- All current plans for parish leadership in the Archdiocese include a priest as parish leader. Our proposal was not accepted.
- The Archdiocese would have accepted Fr Lawrence's retirement, and also retained the right to place a priest in parish leadership at St. Vincent's. Fr Lawrence chose to not retire. Chris remained in the position for which he was hired; that of PA.

Why is Chris choosing to resign now (after four years at St. Vincent's)?

- Everyone involved in the hiring process had hopes that the PA position might be able to transition to a PLD. It was always understood, however, that this might not happen. When it became evident it would not, Chris chose to stay on as PA. While exercising a ministry of leadership within the parish, Chris nevertheless does not have final authority in certain areas. Dick and Chris hoped that challenges around this could be worked through. Ultimately the position proved unsustainable for Chris.

If Chris was ordained as a Deacon, would that make a difference (as far as the Archdiocese is concerned) in his suitability for a PLD position?

- Fr. Lawrence and Chris had discussed this, but the formation program takes several years. Chris had previously devoted many years to priestly formation, and he did not wish to pursue the diaconate.

How will Chris' resignation impact the parish, both in a practical way (i.e. who will do the tasks he currently does) and a social/spiritual way (since he is a valued member of the parish and is recognized in a role of some leadership)?

- Fr Lawrence said Chris had prepared a "Transfer of duties" list of projects and tasks, which would be helpful in determining how to plan for the practical aspects of his leaving.
- Colleen suggested the need for an exit interview; she'd spoken Chris and he agreed to participate in one. Council approved the members of the PA/PLD search committee to plan and conduct an exit interview. Colleen will communicate with those members and Chris to facilitate this.

- There was discussion without resolution on how to involve all interested parishioners in discussion in order to address our concerns. Some present felt that many parishioners would have strong feelings about Chris' departure, and that there ought to be a forum to air these.
- Council President Joe Yingling requested all parish committees address this issue before the next Council meeting. Discussions are to include practical/functional considerations, such as ways in which the PA facilitated the mission of the committees, and also spiritual/social considerations. Fr. Lawrence distributed copies of Chris' Transfer of Duties notes to committee representatives (for guiding discussion). Joe asked committees to report on their responses by the Sept. Council mtg.

What about Fr Lawrence's retirement plans?

- Fr Lawrence said he now has no plans to retire in the near future. He is entitled to some time off each week, which he rarely takes; he would like to take that time.

Will we hire another PA?

- We can't know yet whether this is our best option. Mark observed that the question is not as simple as reducing Chris' role to a list of tasks. Rather, we need to discern Chris' contribution to the parish, and whether he participated in providing a "glue" that the parish needs.
- In the near future, we may need to hire someone to provide administrative assistance; possibly the same person we may hire to build a useable parish database. Graham strongly encouraged the hiring of a temp. The Council recognizes Fr Lawrence has the authority to hire a temp as necessary. Mark suggested Catholic Relief may have some resources helpful for the parish need for a database. He will look into this.

What about a goodbye for Chris?

- Peggy Meyer suggested there ought to be a goodbye celebration on Chris' last Sunday with (at least) a cake and perhaps a special song for him. Fr. Lawrence suggested it be after the 11:45 Mass so that it not have to be curtailed by the beginning of that service. Peggy will take the lead on this.

Pastor's Report, other items:

Fr Lawrence requested the September Parish Council meeting be moved to September 15. He will be on vacation the second Tuesday of the month. This was approved by Council.

Fr Lawrence distributed a report noting six priorities for the coming year. There was not time to discuss each priority at this meeting. Some were addressed in discussion as reported above.

- 1) Staffing decisions. The parish is losing both our PA and Jesuit Volunteer, Kieran Ruppert. Fr Lawrence proposed several ways we might deal with these changes.
 - i. Replace departing staff one-for-one.
 - ii. Reconfigure the staff; different jobs, duties, pay scales, etc.
 - iii. Redefine the way the parish does things; more emphasis on volunteers and/or contractors.
 - iv. Reduce what we do; use the money for plant and/or savings.
- 2) Ongoing response to *Laudato Si*
- 3) Response to the Archbishop's letter on parish planning (*A Light Brightly Visible*)
- 4) Planning for St V's 175th birthday, fall 2016.
- 5) Immediate need for a parish database.
- 6) Continued church exterior renewal.

Outreach and Engagement Committee Report

Michael Keating reported on the progress in planning for our fall lecture series on *Laudato Si*. (Planning notes attached to this document below). The committee still needs some volunteers to commit to help.

Finance Committee Report

Mark Palmer and Fr Lawrence briefly went over the finance report. They noted the drop in average attendance at Mass over the last year, and that the per person average donation has gone up. Thus we have not seen a drop in offertory totals although we have seen a drop in numbers of people at Mass. Fr. Lawrence pointed out that, to be a community, we need people in community, and we do not want to lose more parishioners.

Joe noted that, although we had many unanswered questions, and hadn't been able to address all items on our agenda, we were now past time for adjourning.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Outreach and Engagement Committee

Continued planning for the Pope Francis Encyclical Speaker Series.

The three-night event is confirmed for:

Sept. 30 - Dr. Stephen Scharper (Science)

Oct. 14 - Dr. John Haught (Theology)

Oct. 28 - Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker (Action)

Skip Sanders has agreed to serve as moderator for the series.

The Series Title is: *The Cry of The Earth - How Pope Francis Calls Us to the Science, Faith and Action of Saving Our Common Home*

Each program will consist of 45-minute presentation by the speaker, followed by 30-minute Q&A and 30 minutes for book signing and refreshments. We will look into whether we can begin each night with the piano music and environmental images slideshow that was recently shared at the 9:30 Mass.

Volunteers: Rita has emailed her lists seeking volunteers as greeters, ushers, parking liaisons, refreshment servers. Rita and Anne Maura will work together in organizing and assigning volunteers. So far, 10 people have volunteered to do all three events, one can do all three events as a backup, and four can do one or two dates, but not all three. Ideally, we still need another 10-15 volunteers.

Parking: Jane Willeboordse spoke with Harbor Park Garage and they will offer parking to us at a rate of \$8/vehicle. This can be paid by the attendees, or we could provide free parking and they would bill us per vehicle. Michael will reach out to the post office to see if we can send overflow parking to their front lot.

Security: Kathy Younkin is working with "Silver Star Security" <http://www.broadwayservices.com/bsi/security.aspx> to hire two security guards for three hours each at a cost of \$45 per hour per guard.

Refreshments: We will purchase and offer hot coffee, iced tea and wine, as well as light snacks of some kind. Anne Maura will lead this effort and coordinate with Rita for volunteers.

Audio/Visual: - Joe Hamilton will work with Zinnia Video Solutions to tape, edit and produce videos of all three events at a total estimated costs of \$1,200.

Program and talking points for volunteers: Michael Keating and Brenda Smith will produce the program. Michael will coordinate the content and Brenda will design.

Nursery: We need to discuss whether to offer childcare and how to staff it if we choose to do so

Facilities Committee

- Father Lawrence approached some committee members on their way to the meeting to stress that we needed to arrange for cameras and lighting in the park. Jim is getting estimates on this project and we need to get an estimate on what it will take to repair the fence. There was also discussion of the possibility of putting gates up at the 3 entrances to the park. We will get an estimate before making a decision on this. By 7/15, Jim said we should have the estimates on the security cameras and lights.
- Jim reported that the south side work should be completed by the end of the month. They need to be finished before we can proceed with the inspection and estimates on the repair of the collapsed drain.
- Jim reported that the floor in the men's clothing room has substantial termite damage and damage by rats. Baltimore Trades Guild is in the process of replacing the floor and repairing the walls, during which project a window in the room will be repaired and will have bars installed on the outside. During these renovations, the room will be sealed to prevent more rats from entering. The outside door to the room will be replaced with a steel door compliant with the historic trust guidelines.
- The total cost for the doors to this room and to the undercroft will be approximately \$13,000.
- The 2nd floor accessibility project is complete and Jim will be doing the painting of the space.
- Two benches in the park were repaired by committee members in June. There was discussion on whether it is advisable to repair the remainder of the benches with the AZEK material, because of the difficulty of securing them with proper screws. We will consider using wood for the remainder of the (9) benches, but will see how these first two wear after a couple of months.
- Jim stated that he has not yet been able to replace the emergency light batteries and repair the spigots, but stated that neither project will be a big expense.
- The trimming of the ivy has been completed.
- Jim has gotten a bid of \$11,395 for the sealing, coating and painting of the parking lot and there was discussion of the need for curbs. The estimate included the curbs, but we might reconsider whether we need any or all of the curbs as they currently are.
- Jim reported that the contractor working on the accessibility project suggested that we contact Bath Fitters to get an estimate on replacing the tub in Fr. Chuck's bathroom. Jim will do that.
- Jim reported that we got an estimate from Harford Refrigeration of \$11,000 for insulating the ductwork in the undercroft. Jim has also contacted someone to get an estimate for installing a drop ceiling in the undercroft. There was some negative feedback from some committee members after having looked again at the undercroft and evaluating what a drop ceiling would look like.
- There was some discussion of the water audit that had been received and some felt the suggestion for a green roof might be worth looking at.
- Jim reported that the doorbells in the rectory need to be replaced and the office staff had requested getting a system that would provide video and the capability of buzzing someone in. An estimate for that would be \$8000, which the committee felt was too high.
- The grounding cable has not been replaced yet, but there is another one on the property.
- After all the above discussion, the following projects were given top priority for the next fiscal year:
 - Security cameras and lights in the park

- Replacement of the door to the men's clothing room and the doors to the undercroft
- Repair of the collapsed drain pipe

Education and Enrichment Committee

- The 2015 Retreat was discussed. The evaluation summary had not yet been completed, but it was evident that Gerry Fialkowski, the director, was very well received.
- There were numerous ideas for directors for the 2016 retreat, which will be explored. The children's program for next year's retreat will continue with the same presenters.
- Anne Gibson gave a lengthy report on 2015 VBS (Vacation Bible School) plans, and Faith Formation classes, which are to be presented by the diocese AT St V. She also advised that grant money is available for parishioners toward Masters in Theology at the Ecumenical Institute.
- Cape May weekend will be 10/16-18.
- Dinner for 8 is going well and will continue through September, 2015.
- Our 2016 budget was discussed and has since been sent to the finance committee.

Liturgy Committee Report

- The Liturgy Committee has not met since the last Council meeting in June.
- Women in Ministry, Joe Organ, and the Social Action Committee recently completed - to much acclaim - the Summer Series on *Ask the Beasts*.
- Our Committee's annual retreat is Sat, Sept. 19 from 9:30am to 1:30pm with the following agenda:
 - o Setting goals for the coming year
 - Advent Planning
 - Liturgy Times
 - o Christmas Midnight Mass changing times
 - o Non-Easter baptisms in front of church
 - o Teaching Masses

Social Action Committee Report

Friday Dinner: We had a group from First Baptist Church in Tomball, TX., who were on a mission trip in Philadelphia and bought sleeping bags and pillows to sleep in churches instead of hotels. They looked for a homeless shelter to donate them before flying home but couldn't find one. They stopped at Chick-fil-A in Baltimore where one of our Our Lady of the Fields' volunteers was working and she told them about our dinner. They came and gave our guests their sleeping bags and pillows and sang songs. It was lovely. We had 933 guests in June and 1213 in July. Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parishioners donated the 5th Friday meal and made breakfast. We also had an ice cream sundae bar one of the weeks. We passed out fresh produce many of the weeks and served tomatoes from Our Lady of the Fields' garden. We continue to give clothing and suitcases and back packs many weeks. *Garden Harvest may donate food on Fridays and is looking for a volunteer to pick it up in the Hunt Valley/Reisterstown area and deliver it to St. V's for dinner. If you could do it please let Peggy know.*

The Resource Exchange: We supplied 8 Health Care for the Homeless clients with furniture and starter kits in July and 8 in June. We share information about our parish and have had several clients join us for Friday night dinner. They always look for us and tell us how much they like their furniture. We had our

annual pick-up at Charlestown Retirement Home. Thanks to Kieran and his contact at JHU, we were trained in Healthify and can now give our clients information on support services in their respective neighborhoods. Troyana, our JHU contact, has also helped us on moves and packing kits.

Mass: We planned the 3rd week of the summer series on Creation and will plan the St. V feast day Mass.

Peace & Justice Committee: Habitat called to thank us for our donation and they are ready to ask for help on builds again. The United Churches' build will be 9/12. Pax Christi held their regional meeting at St. Vincent's on 8/1 and discussed demonstrations against drones, the encyclical and other social justice issues. The Hiroshima Commemoration is on 8/6 and the Nagasaki Commemoration on 8/9. Pax Christi will have a wine and cheese social at the Frascati's on 9/12. Sr. Patricia Chappell, USA Pax Christi Executive Director, will be the keynote speaker at their Day of Reflection, 10/17 at St. V's, 9:30 - 1:00.

Please consider attending. Maureen Daly was recognized by BRIDGE for her wonderful years of service.

Emergency Services: The food program gave groceries to families in June and spent \$100. They spent \$1250 in July, most of this for the Christmas turkeys. The men's program gave clothing in June to 46 men and spent \$280. They take July and August off but bought future clothing and spent \$245. We are looking for a volunteer to accept the government food on the 4th Friday of each month, time flexible, and prepare a monthly report on remaining food. Please let Peggy know if you could do that.

Jonestown Planning Council: City Springs Elementary/Middle School is working on their new space in the school across the street, Freedom Academy, to have it ready for the start of school.

Ronald McDonald House is still on target and the Hendler group found a financial backer and look good for a fall groundbreaking. Just a reminder the outdoor film festival begins 8/9 at 8:00 p.m with *The Great Dictator* starring Charlie Chaplin. 8/16 indoors at 5:30 pm will be *An American Tail*, a children's movie. 8/23 at 8:00 pm will be *Gentleman's Agreement* with Gregory Peck. We attended the Vision Meeting on 7/28 at the Jewish Museum focusing on transforming the neighborhood.