



The Newsletter of Pax Christi MetroNewYork

Fall 2019 Number 121

Dear Reader,

Our last issue of *Kerux* featured a new layout. In hopes that you liked it and found it easier to read, we are continuing with that format. Please be sure to let us know, and, as always, we appreciate your feedback about anything else as well.

- Rosemarie Pace, PCMNY Director

An Anti-Racism Perspective on *Open Wide Our Hearts*, the November 2018 Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism

by Mary T. Yelenick

In November of 2018, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral letter on racism, “Open Wide Our Hearts” (<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/upload/open-wide-our-hearts.pdf>). Many had hoped that this long-awaited document¹ would be an improvement over the bishops’ decades-earlier, 1983 pastoral on racism, “Brothers and Sisters To Us,” whose curious title itself reflected the racial chasm existing between Black Catholics and their white counterparts. (For if People of Color were “Brothers and Sisters to Us,” who were the “Us”? White people, presumably.)

Yet while credit is due the bishops for attempting again to address the scourge of racism, the 2018 pastoral letter reflects little improvement over the 1983 letter. It does not acknowledge, address, or seek atonement for the *unique* role of the Catholic Church in perpetuating and practicing racism. It does not include, overtly, the voices of People of Color. It does not even address the “truth . . . that the sons and daughters of the Catholic Church have been complicit in the evil of racism” until two-thirds of the way through the document – with that discussion being only three paragraphs in length.

Nor does the 2018 pastoral letter include any mention of “white privilege”; yet, it is whites who are responsible for the ravages of racism. It is whites who have historically controlled the Catholic Church. And it is whites who are the only racial group in this country who, on a daily basis, are exempted from coping with the consequences of the racial category to which they have been assigned by whites. To pretend to speak of the effects on one group by another group – and yet not to mention that other group – itself bespeaks entrenched white privilege.² And it is that reality that we – and the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Bishops – must honestly acknowledge, and work to dismantle.³

The document reads as though stitched together by multiple factions, each struggling to assert a different view of the meaning, significance, and relevance of racism. It seems a mishmash of disparate strands of theology, selective history, partisan politics, and denial. One particularly jarring paragraph, which opens with a criticism of the “killing of unarmed

¹ As Catholic theologian Fr. Bryan Massingale notes in his landmark book, “Racial Justice and the Catholic Church” (Orbis 2010), at p. 43, “[p]erhaps the most remarkable thing to note concerning U.S. Catholic social teaching on racism is how little there is to note.”

² For an illuminating look at this reality, see “White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism” by Robin DiAngelo (Beacon Press 2018).

³ See the excellent article by Franciscan friar Daniel P. Horan, appearing in NCR on February 20, 2019, at: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/faith-seeking-understanding/bishops-letter-fails-recognize-racism-white-problem>.

African Americans by law enforcement officials,” veers suddenly into a “condemn[ation of] violent attacks against the police.”

I was reminded, when reading the pastoral letter, of how we humans often hide behind lofty rhetoric to avoid dealing with uncomfortable truths. Most of the early portion of the document—while acknowledging somewhat off-handedly that “even churches” (p. 4) have engaged in racist practices—focuses on mistreatment of People of Color by *other* people and institutions. It is heavy with scriptural references (spanning the Old and New Testaments, the story of Cain, the Book of Genesis, Original Sin, Eden, and a Triune God). One might have thought that Jesus’ command to “love one another” might have been sufficient Scriptural basis upon which to construct a pastoral letter against racism. But then one might have had to spend more time filling its pages with an honest discussion of the Catholic Church and racism.

Where the Catholic Church *is* discussed, it is often in the context of what the bishops believe the Church “did right,” with Catholic missionaries described as having “heroically defended Native Americans as they sought to bring the Good News of Christ to many who had yet to hear it” (*id.* at 12). While there is an acknowledgment that “[m]any, but certainly not all, Native peoples accepted the Gospel willingly” (*id.*), there is no telling of the story from the point of view of Native Americans – some of whom, after all, are Catholics, and whose personal and historical viewpoints might have been quite instructive. And while the document acknowledges that “acts done [by the Church] in the power of Christ’s Spirit” were “overshadowed by the devastation caused by policies of expansion and manifest destiny, fueled by racist attitudes, that led to the near eradication of Native American peoples and their cultures” (*id.*), there is little honest discussion of the multitude of specific doctrines, policies, and practices of the Church itself that contributed to the genocide of native peoples.

Similarly, while the pastoral letter purports to describe the “African American Experience” (*id.* at 13), the views of African Americans themselves on that issue are not articulated. While acknowledging that “African Americans have been branded by individuals, society, *and even, at times, by members of the Church*, with the message that they are inferior” (*id.* at p. 14 (emphasis added)), the drafters hurriedly divert the spotlight to Catholic religious communities and individuals who “worked tirelessly against the prevailing current of racism to share the Catholic faith with persons of African descent” (*id.* at 14). Such “whitewashing,” in all its connotations, crowds out the realities of history in an effort to pat oneself on the back.

And while the pastoral letter describes discriminatory treatment suffered by “Hispanics” in employment, income, pay, treatment, and through “immigration raids and mass deportation” (*id.* at 16), there is no discussion of the experience of Latinx people vis-à-vis the Catholic Church. While there are a number of prominent African-American and Latinx theologians who have done extensive writing on issues of racism in the Catholic Church, it is hard to detect their scholarship, or their voices, in this document. To the extent their voices were not solicited or included, or their insights suppressed, the document will necessarily remain unrepresentative, unfinished, and unhelpful.

A critical section entitled “Acknowledging Sin” is only three paragraphs long – and doesn’t appear until quite late in the document (*id.* at 21-22). It admits, in abbreviated fashion, that “the sons and daughters of the Catholic Church have been complicit in the evil of racism” (p. 21) and that a 1452 Papal Bull “granted apostolic permission for the kings of Spain and Portugal to buy and sell Africans, setting the stage for the slave trade” (*id.* at 21). While the document does acknowledge other “ways that racism has permeated the life of the Church and persists to a degree event today” (pp. 21-22), it does not identify current manifestations of racism in the Church (such as the continuing segregation of places of worship; the steady abandonment by dioceses of parishes whose congregations comprise largely People of Color, in favor of wealthier, white parishes; the painful formation experiences of Catholic priests and sisters who are People of Color; and other examples of yet-unacknowledged lingering issues of racism). And while the bishops do “ask for forgiveness from all who have been harmed by these sins committed in the past or in the present” (*id.* at 22), they urge “all” to “take responsibility for correcting the injustices of racism and healing the harms” (*id.* at 23). They then charge an “Ad Hoc Committee” with the task of “implement[ing] the vision of this pastoral letter” (*id.* at 24).

My overarching reaction to this disappointing document was a fervent wish that each member of the UCCB – and every Catholic – would read “The Sin of White Supremacy: Christianity, Racism, & Religious Diversity in America” (Orbis Books 2017) by Professor Jeannine Hill Fletcher of Fordham University. That book, and others (including the work of Fr. Bryan Massingale, and “Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence” (Edited by Cassidy & Mukulich (Orbis 2007)) – far more than does this pastoral letter – courageously explore the unvarnished story of racism and the Catholic Church. And it is only in learning and acknowledging that unsettling history that we as Catholics can begin the process of racial honesty and expiation of our sin of racism.

Mary Yelenick is a member of the Pax Christi USA Anti-Racism Team, as well as a member of Pax Christi International’s NGO team at the United Nations and a new member of their Board.

A Very Pax Christi Weekend

The weekend of July 18th to the 21st was a grand opportunity for Pax Christi USA leadership to meet. It was a gathering of National Staff, National Council, and Regional Leaders at the Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. It was not unique, but it had been at least a couple of years since we were able to do this, and it was a very valuable time to share what's been happening across the country in the world of Pax Christi and what we would like to see happen into the future.

Prior to the meeting on Thursday, the 18th, many members of Pax Christi USA joined other Catholics from numerous religious congregations and organizations in a Catholic Day of Action against child detention. There were memorable speeches from various representatives of the groups, most especially from a mother from El Salvador holding her baby and speaking in Spanish about her desire for sanctuary and fear that she will be separated from her child. PCUSA Bishop-President John Stowe of Lexington, KY was not present, but he was one of seven bishops who sent formal messages of support. Seventy participants committed civil disobedience at the U.S. Senate building in an effort to rouse the faithful's consciences against inhumane policies.

Later that day, the PCUSA meetings began with introductions, prayer, supper, and a social. Ten of PCUSA's 16 regions were present, along with most of the National Council and staff. It was an enriching time to re-connect with some of the "old-timers" and to connect with the "new-comers."

Over the next two days, the relationships continued to grow as we engaged in important, sometimes difficult, discussions about priorities and processes. There were periods when Regional Leaders met among themselves while the National Council and Staff did the same, and then there were periods when we met together to report back, expressing concerns and desires, needs and new ideas. Topics went from the definition of regions; our identity as a movement, organization, or both; access to membership lists and Council minutes; the desire for more resources; ways to attract more young people and to interact more with parishes to the "Back from the Brink" campaign to move the U.S. from the brink of nuclear war; disarmament from *all* weapons; the Charter for Compassion; the Poor People's Campaign; Campaign Nonviolence; and promoting the "planting" of Peace Poles. We even had a mini-workshop on technology to help us make better use of it in our daily work for peace.

A highlight of the weekend was our concluding Mass with Fr. Joe Nangle who was also celebrating his birthday that same day. Much to his surprise, our closing song was a rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday." Following this lovely Mass was a social to say goodbye and thank you to Sr. Patty Chappelle, PCUSA's departing Executive Director. Sr. Patty has been elected to her congregation's leadership, thus her departure. Since this meeting, we are all happy to announce the Sr. Patty's replacement has been chosen. He is Johnny Zokovitch, a former PCUSA staff member returning to serve PCUSA in this new capacity. Johnny brings a wealth of experience; we are very pleased to welcome him "home."



Farewell and Welcome!

With a new fiscal year come some changes at Pax Christi Metro New York (PCMNY). Here's an update on some of the comings and goings.



As many of you know, we had to say goodbye to our amazing Board President, Fr. Francis Gargani, C.Ss.R. because of his departure from metropolitan New York. Fr. Francis is now establishing a new home in Washington, D.C. at the former Redemptorist Seminary. Words cannot express what Fr. Francis gave to PCMNY over his term as president. His energy and enthusiasm cannot be measured, nor can his generosity. Fr. Francis LOVES to provide the warmest of hospitality at meetings and events. Consequently, he was always providing us with refreshments of various kinds and amounts. He hosted us at the Redemptorist Guest House in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn several times for Epiphany Parties and Visioning Days. Of course, he was also a gift to all of us at Masses he offered with inspiring homilies and effusive song. We are so very grateful for his time with us and thankful that Washington, D.C. isn't *that* far away.

Hopefully, he will be visiting New York City now and then, and we will be seeing him in DC when we head in his direction.

Another valued Board member who has left the Board is Terry Febles. Terry has been a quiet force for the past couple of years, self-deprecating, but oh so wise and insightful! Fortunately, Terry is not leaving the New York area and will remain on our Education Committee where we count on her continued wisdom and insight.



Happily, we are welcoming a new member to the Board, Patricia Krasnausky. Pat is the President/CEO of Cabrini Elder Care of Westchester. She has also been a long-time supporter of Pax Christi. Pat brings to our Board her expertise as an administrator, along with her commitment to the faith, peacemaking, and social justice. We are very pleased to have her join us.

Not a Board member, but an invaluable summer volunteer warrants both welcome and farewell. Katherine Santarpia, a Bryn Mawr rising sophomore, contacted the PCMNY office in May to offer her services for the summer. She knew of Pax Christi from her high school, St. Joseph Hill in Staten Island.

Katherine proved to be a tremendous gift, taking on mundane clerical tasks willingly and competently, helping at the Peacemaker Reception with great poise and grace, and exercising impressive skill in reaching out to high schools and colleges throughout our region to introduce or re-introduce them to Pax Christi, to remind them of our Young Peacebuilder Award, to invite them to help create a young people's Advisory Council, and to put forth the possibility of a visit from PCMNY to speak directly to the school community about who we are, what we do, and how we can collaborate. Although Katherine returned to college in late August, she promises to keep in touch and to stay involved, so this farewell is only temporary.



Finally, we are thrilled to welcome a new staff member. Our Director, Rosemarie Pace, is cutting back to part-time, working three days a week, and her new Administrative Assistant, Elda Luisi, is providing additional part-time hours to complete the office work for PCMNY. As noted in our summer letter to you, Elda is a member of the St. Francis Xavier community. She has worked at the Catechetical Office at the Archdiocese of New York and currently works part-time at the Propagation of the Faith. She is also an actor who's performed off-Broadway. Elda comes to Pax Christi Metro New York (PCMNY) with all the skills we were seeking and more. Most importantly, she comes with a knowledge and passion for Pax Christi. Please be sure to welcome her when you call or meet her at one of our many events.



The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.
Mahatma Gandhi

An Invitation

Having just read about some of our departing and in-coming PCMNY Board members, perhaps you would like to join or know someone you think would have the commitment to Christian peacemaking and the appropriate skills to help PCMNY thrive, please consider the following and let us know:

The Board of PCMNY is a collaborative and collegial group. We observe certain organizational formalities, such as deliberate agendas and rotation of opening prayer and note-taking roles. The Board is also a community of its own, evident in occasions such as Epiphany when we celebrate with socializing and gift exchange. Board membership is an opportunity to come to understand more deeply the mission of PCMNY and to help strategize how to fulfill that mission even better. It is the chance to see a wider view of PCMNY, such as our relationship with the Archdiocese and other peace/justice organizations.

We invite you to nominate potential members for the Board, including yourself. ***Below are the criteria and responsibilities for members of the Board of PCMNY, which meets on the fourth Tuesday of alternate months at 6:30 PM: September, November, January, March, and May, with occasional exceptions as holidays or weather dictate.***

Required: In general we seek individuals faithful to the goals and mission of Pax Christi, committed to Gospel nonviolence; at least 18 years of age; active in Pax Christi Metro New York (PCMNY) or willing and able to become active upon nomination; willing and able to serve the administrative functions of the Board. (The Board is responsible for the management and the programing of PCMNY.)

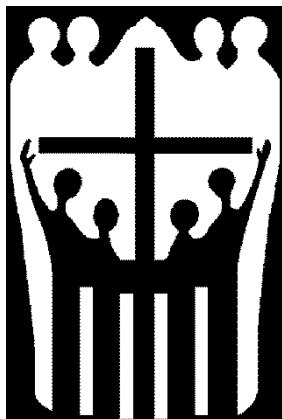
Responsibilities: It is said that Board members should provide the three w's: wisdom, work, and wealth. Board members serve a two-year term, an opportune time to share wisdom. They are also asked to participate in at least one committee, whether Development, Education, Finance or Witness, and to help with at least one event per year, whether organizing or hosting. Finally, Board members are asked to help sustain the financial solvency of PCMNY either through a personal donation or by assisting in various fundraising activities.

Recommended: Someone already active in PCMNY through a local group, committee, or volunteer service.

Particularly welcome: Young adults; individuals fluent in at least one language in addition to English; people of color.

Helpful but not necessary: Business skills, (e.g. publicity, marketing, finance, personnel; legal expertise); skill in web design; writing and editing; knowledge and experience in fundraising or organizational management; having experience, resources and/or contacts in peace and justice.

Please reflect on these and send your nominations, including name, address, e-mail and phone contact information, along with your own name and contact information as soon as possible. Please also provide a paragraph explaining why you are nominating this person, even if it is yourself. We will contact nominees as they come in. Those chosen for the Board will begin their term when available.



Nominate Peacemakers for 2020

It's time once again to nominate notable Peacemakers for our annual Awards Ceremony. As always, we are seeking those whose efforts, vision, and spirit lead us on the way to peace. One should be **a person of faith whose peacemaking has reached people across the nation** in his/her efforts to teach peace, make peace, and be peace. The other should be **a person of faith whose work is helping to transform metropolitan New York into the City of God**. Please nominate one or both who fit these descriptions, have inspired you, and will draw others to our cause. **Send a paragraph** for each to the PCMNY office *by November 6th*. **Designate if each nominee is for the national or local award. Tell us why** you think he or she should be honored as a peacemaker. And please **include contact information** for your nominees. **Send an e-mail** message to info@nypaxchristi.org, and be sure to include all required information. Thanks!



PCMNY Peacemakers and Young Peacebuilder 2019

Gifts of Peace

have been given in honor of:

Joseph Dirr* Leon Drumm* Meredith Drumm*
Linda Flanagan* Matthew Flanagan*
Judy & Bob Keeler* Mary Kay Land;*
Mary Anne Muller* Dawn Murdock*
Abigail Anne Rymdzionek* Kathy Sanders*
Joan D. Yukl

and in memory of:

S. Kathy Britt, CSJ* Larry Calia*
Fr. Michael Carrano* Lester Castellana*
Anita & Domenico Ciacchio* Sandra Cole*
Jennie & Gus DiMaria* S. Rosemary Kern, CSJ*
Tonie Malone* Maria Mills, MCA* Nicholas Pezolino*
Tony Pucino, MCA* Sue Robitaille* Jose Torres*

Please remember them in prayer.

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Fall, 2019

"Kerux" is the Greek word meaning "herald". As the name of our newsletter, it reminds us that we are to be heralds of God's nonviolent love. We welcome letters, articles and reviews.

Kerux

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John Kemp

Patricia Krasnauskay

Joe McDonough

Director

Rosemarie Pace

Editor

Karen Mack

Announcements

UN International Peace Day

Help us observe UN International Peace Day with a screening of the informative and inspiring film, *The Nuns, The Priests, and The Bombs*, on Sunday afternoon, September 15th, from 2 to 4:30 PM at McNally Amphitheatre, Fordham University Lincoln Center. Campus, 140 W. 62nd Street, NYC. Discussion to follow with Plowshares activists Sisters Carol Gilbert, Ardeth Platte, and Megan Rice (invited).

UN International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

Join us for an Interfaith Prayer Service on Thursday, September 26th, at 10:00 AM at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, E. 47th Street and Second Avenues in Manhattan. If you would like to share a prayer from your faith tradition for nuclear weapons abolition or for peace in general, please contact the Pax Christi Metro New York office, 212-420-0250 or info@nypaxchristi.org.

Fall Assembly

We will return to Manhattan College on Saturday, November 2nd, for our annual Fall Assembly. Our title/theme is *Deadly Silence: Finding Our Voice*. Our keynote speaker is Robert Keeler, Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist and long-time peace activist from Pax Christi Long Island. Plan to join us for the full day from 10 AM to 4 PM. Registration to come in September.

Human Rights/Holy Innocents

Still in the planning stage, we hope to gather on Sunday afternoon, December 8th. Possible themes are the refugee crisis or the challenge of homelessness and healing. Stay tuned for the final decision.

Peacemaking through the Arts

Our winter concert is still in production, but we are hoping to feature the beautiful harmonies of Willow, a local a capella women's chorus who specialize in music from interfaith and international folk traditions that promote peace and social justice across borders. Our hoped-for date is Sunday, February 9th, 2020. Time: 2:30 to 4:30 PM. Location to be announced.

Retreat 2020

Sr. Cathleen Murtha, DW, will be leading us on our Lenten retreat from March 13th to the 15th at the Maryknoll Sisters Center. Theme to be announced.

Winter Appeal

If you haven't already done so, please reflect on the many reasons you value PCMNY, especially in the current political climate, and respond as generously as possible to our annual appeal. If you did respond, THANK YOU!

Other Ways to Support Your Pax Christi Region:

Support us by searching the Internet with GoodSearch.com (powered by Yahoo) or shopping online with GoodShop.com. Just indicate Pax Christi Metro New York as your charity. You can also turn your online shopping and searching into much-needed donations at: www.iGive.com/PaxChristiMetroNewYork and <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/13-3424349>.

"Gifts of Peace": Donate to PCMNY in honor of those you love, whether they're celebrating a special holiday, a birthday, anniversary, jubilee, or new baby, are in need of encouragement, or mourning a loss. Cards are available from the PCMNY office for a recommended donation of \$5each.

Pennies for Peace: On your own or with others, collect pennies throughout the year. Convert them to dollars and send them to PCMNY as a year-end gift.

Matching Gifts: Ask your company if it will match your gift to PCMNY.

Bequests: Please remember PCMNY in your will. Our legal name is Pax Christi Metro New York and our tax ID number is 13-3424349.

Upcoming Events

- Sept. 15th: UN Peace Day Event, Fordham University Lincoln Center Campus, 2:00-4:30 PM
Sept. 17th: Fall Assembly Mailing, PCMNY Office
Sept. 24th: Board Meeting, PCMNY office, 6:30 PM
Sept. 26th: Interfaith Prayer Service for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons,
Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, 10:00 AM
Nov. 2nd: Fall Assembly, Manhattan College, 10:00AM-4:00 PM
Nov. 6th: Deadline to Nominate a Peacemaker
Nov. 26th: Appeal Mailing, PCMNY Office
Nov. 26th: Board Meeting, PCMNY office, 6:30 PM
Dec. 1st: *Kerux* Deadline for Winter Issue
Dec. 17th: Peacemaking through the Arts Mailing, PCMNY Office
Jan. 7: Board Meeting/Epiphany Party, Location TBA, 6:30 PM
Feb. 9th: Peacemaking through the Arts, Location TBA, 2:30-4:30 PM

Contact the office for updated information on all events at 212-420-0250, email us at info@nypaxchristi.org or visit our website at <http://www.nypaxchristi.org>.

Also visit us on Facebook and Twitter.

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