

For The Bulletin Of May 26, 2019



THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

From Father Robert

Our gospel today continues to be from the Gospel of John, and interestingly, it's from Jesus' Last Supper Discourse. So even though we are in the Easter Season, we continue to return to the Last Supper for words of wisdom from Jesus. And these words are appropriate as we approach the conclusion of the Easter Season at Pentecost, the feast of the giving of the Holy Spirit, which we will celebrate in two weeks. But here Jesus tells the disciples forthrightly that the Father will send the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, in Jesus' name. The role of the Spirit is to teach the disciples, and to remind them of what Jesus said. The Spirit then is a gift of the Father. This gift was given not only to that generation of Christians but to us as well. We have that same Advocate to teach us and the other followers of Jesus. But that is not the only gift we receive.

A gift of Jesus given to the disciples is peace, but Jesus is quick to say that it's not the peace given by the world, but that given by Jesus. The world's peace can be understood as the absence of war, or a cessation of hostilities. Others

interpret it as the peace gained by domination of subject peoples. And in Jesus' time and place we recall that the Romans were the occupying power. A generation after Jesus the city of Jerusalem with its temple would be destroyed by Rome. At the conclusion of that campaign the Romans would say the pacified Judea! The death, destruction, slaughter, fire, and pillaging of Jerusalem and its temple meant for the Romans that the land was at peace! So, no, Jesus' peace is not like that given by world, given by the Romans.

The peace Jesus gives is an interior wholeness, to be at peace with oneself and the world around us. The inner disposition of a disciple is one of peace, not aggression; peace, rather than anger; peace, not hostility; peace, rather than anxiety; peace, not pursuit of ill-gotten gain. The life of a disciple is marked by the gift of peace given by Jesus.



Living The Paschal Mystery

How many of us live lives of peace? And by peace do we mean the absence of strife? Or the peace that Christ gives? The peace that Christ gives is not only for those disciples in the New Testament, it is for us. The relationship we have with Christ means that we do not look to outside forces or external sources for validation. Our worth and sense of self is not measured by job,

position, house, children, family, retirement plan, or the praise of others. Instead, our peace and well-being come from Christ Himself. That peace and security can never be taken away. We are no longer subject to the whims of others, the hazards of the world, or the vagaries of passing fancies. Regardless of our condition in life, we have something fundamental at our core that is a gift. Let us rest in the knowledge that we have been given the gift of peace that comes from Christ Himself.

As we prepare for Pentecost and the conclusion of the Easter Season, how have today's scripture passages affected you?

- In the Acts of the Apostles we see the Jewish leaders of the early church reaching out to the Gentile members of the community. Within our parish are there groups that seem at odds with each other? How might they be invited to reach out to one another in peace?
- In the reading from Revelation, we hear of a city that needs no sun or moon for it is lit by the glory of the Lord. What are the places in your life that need to be touched by the Lord's light?
- How do you experience the peace of Christ in your daily life?
- Jesus tells us, "Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." What troubles your heart at this moment? How might you entrust this fear to God?



About Liturgy: The Temple Where The Spirit Dwells

Today's reading from the Book of Revelation gives us an opportunity to contemplate the symbol of the parish church as a sign of Christ's presence. For this, we look to the Rite of Dedication of a Church: "Christ became the true and perfect temple of the New Covenant and gathered together a people to be His own. This holy people is the Church, that is, the temple of God built of living stones, where the Father is worshiped in spirit and in truth. Rightly, then, from early times 'church' has also been the name given to the building in which the people gather. *Ekklesia* is the Greek word for the Hebrew *qahal*: it describes a group of people who are summoned or convoked, set apart for a purpose."

What is the purpose of this gathering of the people called the church? Again, we look to the Rite of Dedication: "May we open our hearts and minds to receive His word with faith; may our fellowship born in the one font of baptism and sustained at the one table of the Lord, become the one temple of His Spirit, as we gather round His altar in love." By hearing and receiving God's word and in unity through font and table, we become

the temple of the Spirit made visible around the altar. What makes the church building holy is not so much the prayers and anointings over the stone and wood but the love and unity that is visible and shared among its members, most especially with those who have been left out.

This week think about the history of our parish. When was it dedicated? Why was it given the name it bears? Look also to the neighborhood. Who is missing from the neighborhood among our Sunday assembly? What are some ways to help them know this building called the church belongs to them?



This coming Saturday, June 1st, at 4:00 p.m., we will celebrate the 40th Anniversary of our parish. I am deeply grateful to the 40th Anniversary Committee that has helped us prepare for this wonderful moment in our history by the events they have planned over the past 40 weeks as well as all they have done to prepare for the Anniversary Weekend. The Eucharist that afternoon will focus on all that God in His goodness has done with, through, and for us over the past 40 years. It is a time of remembering, celebrating, giving thanks, and looking forward to all that God will continue to do through us in the years ahead. **Fr. George Griener, SJ**, is the homilist for that liturgy as well as the two liturgies on Sunday morning, June

2nd. Each liturgy that weekend will be a celebration of our anniversary. The color for the weekend is **RED** in honor of St. Ignatius of Antioch who was a martyr and for whom our parish is named. You are invited to wear **RED** for each liturgy on both June 1st and 2nd. We will also welcome the priests who have served in the parish over the years. Following the liturgy on Saturday afternoon, there will be a festive dinner prepared by Zandonella Catering that will include dancing afterward. Tickets have been available for the past two weeks and will once again be available following each liturgy this weekend. This is your last chance to purchase a ticket as tickets are limited so if you wish to attend, please get your ticket following liturgy today. No tickets will be sold at the door.

Awakening to astonishment

Spirit gifts for turbulent times

May 17, 2019

by [Joe Grant](#)



Like the Christians who came before us, we live in uncertain times. For us, Pentecost is much more than a symbolic celebration. It arrives each springtime as a new creation, heralding an

extraordinary season laden with gifts, challenges and God-given surprises.

Unexpected presentations

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

(Genesis 1:1-2*)

Where do you turn for inspiration, for challenge or for consolation?

Some years ago, I returned to my Scottish homeland to face a turning point in my life. Hoping to find my bearings, I made a pilgrimage to the remote isle of Iona in the Scottish Hebrides. Amid the rugged majesty of the ancient abbey, I was delighted to discover the raucously unpredictable Spirit-force, depicted not as the dove from the ark or the Jordan baptism, but as a wild goose of the wind-swept Atlantic; an image that harkened back to the wayfaring Celts who first made those islands their home.

I was enchanted by the landscape, and completely captivated by the charisma of the ecumenical Iona community.

Together, they illustrated three dimensions or presentations of an untamable life-force we call Holy Spirit. The ceaseless wind, foaming surf, mossy rocks and screeching seabirds combined with the peace, justice, healing charisma of the Iona community, to conjure that primordial, wild and free spiritual energy that is ever inspiring, always disturbing and endlessly consoling.

Spiritual outbreak

I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Luke 3:16)

How can we access the abundant energy-field of Spirit, and make ourselves available to its powerful gifts, its momentum, its explosive trajectory?

As a young theology student, I had become comfortable with Holy Spirit as a reasonable concept; a trinitarian character, well-contained within in a well-designed, ethereal interplay. Only later, through cross-cultural and interreligious encounters and challenging life experiences, did that Spirit break through those mental confines and break out into my life; to shake me and wake me up. Surprisingly, these Spirit-encounters were not the supernatural stuff of movies or pious melodramas. They were profoundly natural and palpable expressions of surprise, wonder, awe, compassion, humanity, gratitude, grief, remorse, forgiveness, suffering-love and always, always humility.

Bonding force

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

(Matthew 18:20)

Have you ever entered a roomful of people, participated in a ritual, or been drawn into a heartfelt conversation, and felt an immediate sense of intimacy, acceptance and a warm, inclusive welcome?

There is one important spiritual precondition, a caveat we cannot afford to overlook in our increasingly individualistic, atomized culture.

According to Gospel tradition, Holy Spirit is not a personal superpower which individual faith-in-action heroes can harness for their unique exploits. Indeed, it was while visiting the Iona community that I first heard Holy Spirit

described as "the sparks that crackle between us."

We describe as holy or sacred those experiences of wholeness or all-togetherness that draw us near. It is when we gather with others, as community, hungry for connection and unanimity (to be of one spirit) that the power and agency of this Spirit energy-field is amplified through our personal and shared lives. And, it is always for the healing-restoration of our world. Like the molecular bonds that hold everything in the universe together, Holy Spirit is a binding, unifying force that brings all things near and brings us nearer to all things. All it takes is a few, two or three or more, who deeply desire to be brought into togetherness, who long to belong and wish to be made whole.

Breath of fresh air

Then the [Holy One] formed [a human] from the dust of the ground, and breathed into [its] nostrils the breath of life; and the [human] became a living being. (Genesis 2:7; text in brackets added to provide inclusivity.)

When was the last time life took your breath away?

Anyone who has known breathlessness appreciates the powerful gift of a lungful of fresh air. That invigorating rush of oxygen clears the head, flushes the cheeks, as it sharpens our vision and heightens our awareness.

So much of the majesty of each passing moment so easily passes us by.

Astonishment, which literally means being thunderstruck, is one of the clearest indicators of the vitality of our spirit-life. Being astounded means being

jolted awake, beside ourselves with amazement. This invariably leads us to wonder, which opens our hearts to a sense of awe or reverence for the splendid mystery of life. And reverence always culminates in expressions of gratefulness.

Conversely, when we encounter breathtaking vistas or gasp aloud at wanton desecrations and tragedies, inspiration can also steal the very breath from us. At any given moment, and all moments are gifted, we are offered opportunities to explore the magnificent mystery of being alive, wide-eyed and open-hearted. In the clarity of astonishment, a veil lifts and we understand that there is nothing ordinary about existence. We might even say: If we are not astonished, perhaps we are not yet awake.

Disturbing to the core

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the [Temple authorities], Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' (John 20:19-22)

When was the last time your heart broke open, and you were physically moved with compassion?

This question offers yet another metric to measure spiritual well-being. When we understand Holy Spirit as a moving, motivating force, it is worth practicing

those Ignatian exercises that explore the driving forces behind our daily decisions, intentions and interactions. Faithful people like us have long-struggled to break free from the twin tyrannies of the expectation of reward and fear of punishment.

These days, there is a good deal of fear in our lives; fears exploited by media and fear that colors public discourse. And there is much to feed our fears: global climate change and environmental devastation; social breakdown; growing economic disparity; pervasive violence and oppression; weapons of unimaginable destruction; conflict and competition over ever-depleting natural resources; and much more.

Fear remains a powerful motivating force in our lives, and our religious institutions are not immune to its divisive influence. When we are frightened, we draw the curtains, we huddle together with safe, like-minded folk, behind barred doors, with hearts and minds closed tight. This need to feel safe and secure in uncertain times can lead us to spiral inward. When fearful, we hide ourselves and our resources, we hold back, we become suspicious of the differences, needs and motives of others. Moved by a primitive instinct to protect ourselves, we erect a bulwark of absolutes to keep us safe. Driven by fear, we walk into dungeons of our own design. Here the expanse of mystery, the humbling wisdom of not-knowing, the gifts of gratitude, the awe-filled perspective of abundance, the foundation of trust, and the healing power of deep listening all seem beyond our reach. Here we are left to wrestle with the bitter fruits of fear: segregation, stockpiles, starvation and spiritual asphyxiation.

It is no surprise that fear-driven communities tend to be: autocratic; focused on command and control; domineering, dogmatic and self-preoccupied; deprived of creative diversity; rigid and hard-hearted; unwilling to embrace moral complexity; drawn to judgment and punishment; suspicious of free spirits and new ideas; untouched by mercy, and inaccessible to compassion. And we might also add: If our hearts are not breaking at the sorrows and suffering in this world, perhaps we are slumbering through our lives.

Balm of consolation

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. (Isaiah 40:1)

How often have you mouthed a quiet plea out of deep concern for yourself or a dear one, or as reflexive response to tragic or tremendous events, playing out before your eyes?

It is the very experience and expression of compassion, being inwardly moved that melts fear and turns pain inside out. Only the disturbingly compassionate Holy Spirit has the power to unsettle us enough to shake us free from the avaricious temptations of the so-called "prosperity gospel," or its counterpoint expressed in the judgmental and exclusive purity cults that blight our faith communities.

In dire moments, when we are at our most vulnerable, the Gospels proclaim that the Holy Spirit can surprise us with a multiplicity of gifts to inspire, console and disturb us: a breath of life; a flash of insight; a glimmer of hope; unimagined possibilities; unforeseen strength, wonder, wisdom, gratefulness; understanding, awe and humble

reverence. Such is the disturbing peace we can expect to receive and share, when we are willing to come together and cry out amid the turmoil of our times: Come Holy Spirit!

Deeper and wider

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because [God] has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. ... has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19)

What gifts do we have, and what gifts do we urgently need in times like these?

In our own lives, the difference between a gift and a burden is often determined by how we receive it. So much that appears at first as burden can, in the end, become a grace-filled gift.

When we find ourselves backed into a fearful space and deeply troubled by turbulent times, it helps to keep in mind that our church was born in just such an unlikely place. In our fundamental expression of church, re-membered in the breaking of the bread, we acknowledge that there is another, deeper, primal and cosmic movement always at work in our lives and our communities.

In 1968, at the World Council of Churches, Orthodox Metropolitan Ignatius of Latakia offered this description of what happens when we neglect or try to suppress the free-flow and potent presence of the Holy Spirit: Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away,
Christ stays in the past,
the Gospel is a dead letter,
the Church is simply an organization,

authority is a matter of domination,
mission is a matter of propaganda,
the liturgy is no more than an evocation,
Christian living a slave morality.

But in the Holy Spirit:

the cosmos is resurrected and groans with the birth pangs of the Kingdom,
the risen Christ is there,

the Gospel is the power of life,
the Church shows forth the life of the Trinity,

authority is a liberating service,

mission is a Pentecost,

the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation

and, human action is deified.

(Experiencing God, Kenneth Leech)

Pentecost begs a community and gifts it with a mission! It is in our encounters with the gate-crashing, free and fiery Holy Spirit of Pentecost that we are pulled into the outpouring spiral of God's healing mission we call salvation. The ultimate aim and trajectory of authentic spirituality is always down toward intimacy, and out toward ever broader connection. It is this ongoing reclamation of our original at-one-ness we recreate each Sunday in holy Communion.

This feral Spirit shows no respect for religious, cultural, ethnic, national, social, gender or ideological boundaries. It is a fence-jumper, border-crosser, door-buster and bridge-builder. And such spiritual momentum can also carry us up and over, or draw us down and under, every barricade of ideology, theology, caste, class or national agenda that would seek to separate God's children and the primordial oneness of creation.

Let the Spirit lead

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

So, how do we get loosened up, and let the Spirit of Pentecost change our seeing, our being and our doing together?

It helps to remember that Holy Spirit literally adds new dimensions to our lives. And the humbler we are, the more willing we will be to let ourselves be drawn into that outgoing dynamic. Given the magnitude of the suffering and the scope of the crises we are facing, we can no longer afford to cower behind the ramparts of national or religious institutions. We need only cry out for and rely upon the Spirit that knows no denomination, and who promises to gift us with the breadth of wisdom and depth of understanding that we so sorely need. In so doing, we will be led into encounters with other seekers and join a vast movement motivated by a mission bigger than any one church or religious community can contain. As Paul counseled the first followers in Thessalonica: Above all, do not stifle the Spirit! (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

When we decide to cooperate with such a Spirit of Wholeness, it becomes more vital to be transformed, than to be right, more crucial to be loving than to be winning. Healing salvation can no longer be limited to me, my family, my nation, my religious or political affiliation. Together, we move from transactional (what do I get) to relational (how can I give) motivations, as we are drawn out by an ever deeper, wider love.

From the grassroots up and from the heavens down, Spirit gifts are freely outpoured and accessible to the whole community of believers, and to all and anyone hoping for wholeness and healing. These gifts are never self-serving. Just as Holy Spirit is experienced and expressed in the context of community, her gifts are given to salve the wounds of the world and heal the people most sorely afflicted.

One crucial question remains for us, in uncertain times like these: Are we ready and willing to go where such a Holy Spirit might take us?

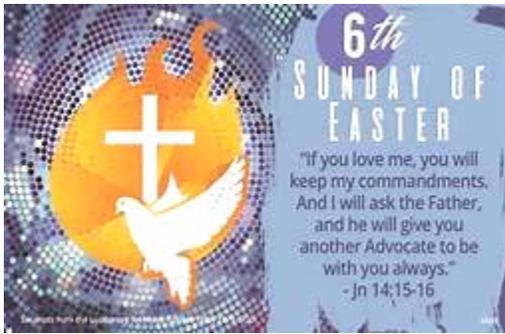
When we catch our breath,
we acknowledge the Source of All
Breath,
with every taking in and every giving
back.

Resting in this Presence that connects us,
with the fiery passion of a love too big to
hold in,
we breathe in ... "Come Holy Spirit!"
we breathe out ... "Holy Spirit Come!"

Spirit of the living Christ,
breathe into us new life and passion.
Bind us into one healing, forgiving
body.

Draw us from isolation and lead us out
to face the whirlwind of pain and
possibility together.

"All shall be well, and all shall be well,
and all manner of thing shall be well."
(Julian of Norwich)



Our Ongoing Interfaith Work

Over the past several months, Carolyn Krantz, our Pastoral Associate for Social Justice, Walter Schlueter, and I have been attending the meetings of “C5,” the newly-formed organization that is building upon the legacy of CCISCO (Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organizing). Carolyn has written a series of reports following each meeting, with each report building upon the previous report. They are as follows: On February 20th, a special meeting was held by PICO CA (People Improving Communities through Organizing) for clergy from all faiths concerning the “Broken System” in Contra Costa. It is the first of ten meetings to be held on the issues facing our area. We were asked, “How do we create a space to build community? How do we change the current system to create a county that belongs to everyone?” We talked about the three B’s- “Building, Bridging and Belonging.” “The economy is like a disassembled car on the factory floor. We have all the parts, but we can’t move.” We were encouraged to commit ourselves to become what we want to see, a county where everyone has a place and everyone has enough to live on. A tall order when we are faced with homelessness, immigration issues, the need for prison reform, and so many other concerns.

Much of this meeting was spent on the question of housing. Dr. Jennifer Martinez presented an historical overview of housing in the Bay Area. We learned that there is not much difference between the red-lining that occurred in the 70’s and the displacement that is occurring now. People with money are creating the displacement and destroying neighborhoods for economic gain. Ordinary people are suffering, especially people of color. Money is driving the train and calling it “progress”. While productivity is increasing exponentially, wages have flat lined. We all are working harder just to keep a roof over our heads and provide for our families.

The housing market has been “commodified,” that is, large corporations have bought up the land and are selling it for huge profits. The Patriot Act cut off foreign investment in the market, but not in real estate. So much of the Bay Area is being bought by foreign investors. Much of San Francisco and Oakland has been bought out, and the displaced have come to Contra Costa and further east to own homes that they can afford.

A highlight of the meeting was a musical presentation by Michael Kim-Eubanks. He started with a familiar song, “This land is your land, this land is our land”, but then shifted the words to the fact that “This Land” was stolen from the Native Americans and built on the backs of slaves. So whose land is it really when it was built on death and struggle? He gave us all much to think about if we are really to own our history and stop commodifying human bodies, stop seeing humans as property. Do we have the good sense to see the systems that

are controlling us? Can we find a clearer way to see the world that Jesus imagined where all are brothers and sisters?

The leaders preached to us: “None of us are sheltered until we all are sheltered. None of us are filled until we all are filled. None of us are free until we all are free.” Sound a bit like the Gospel? In future meetings we will learn more about the issues facing our area and decide on some “good sense” solutions which we can accomplish together.

The Second Report

The second monthly meeting of the Contra Costa County Clergy Cohort was held on March 20. While the first meeting was on the state of housing in the county, this one explored gun violence. Last year there were 40 homicides in the county, one quarter of them in East County. The participants at the meeting shared their hopes and their fears about the escalating violence in our area. We reflected that the first question we need to think about given this information is not, “What do we need to do?”, but rather “Who do we need to become?”

A former gang member spoke to us and related that he had no parental guidance growing up and the models like Martin Luther King, were before his time. He made us aware of the sense of loneliness and lack of stability that makes someone join a gang. The leaders shared that peace is not doing everything around violence, but entering into the world of those who perpetrate violence to explore that world and make a difference. The news reports of what this world is like are not viable.

Rev. Jeffery Brown from Boston gave us a history of violence reduction using Ceasefire tactics in that area. He walked the streets after midnight for many years meeting gang members where they were. He made hope cross the street. Then Rev. Ben McBride from PICO (People Improving Communities through Organizing) shared how they cut the homicide rate in half in five years in Oakland through these Ceasefire tactics. They developed something called “call-ins” where gang members, service providers police and faith leaders would sit around the table and discuss options. 70-80% chose to opt out of violence with this kind of support. Mother Teresa said that, “The problem is that we forgot that we belong to each other.” In order to stop the violence, we need to enter into that world as messengers of peace. This is bringing the church to the streets and seeing that we are all one family. It is not about “locking up the bad guys”, but like Jesus, “eating with publicans and sinners”. We have to be with the people closest to the pain, those at risk of being a victim or a perpetrator of gun violence.

Only one percent of the population solves problems through gun violence. The Center for Disease Control says that every homicide costs the taxpayer one million dollars. If we could provide services to an individual for \$20,000 and a job for \$40,000, we could save a lot of money that could then be redirected to schools and other needs. In this light, using violence reduction tactics is a fiscally responsible thing to do.

The participants at the meeting were aware that homelessness, gang violence, education, and other critical needs in the

county are all interrelated. We need to see the full picture in order to discern where we can most make a difference. The Ceasefire Night Walks are one way to make a difference. They bring us together as a community for peace. They build relationships in the whole community. These walks are held monthly in East County. Contact St. Ignatius of Antioch Parish Office for more information (925-778-0768).

The Third Report

Special Report by Carolyn Krantz, Pastoral Associate for Social Justice
The third meeting of the Contra Costa County Clergy Cohort met April 17th on the topic of Migration. The purpose of these meetings is to identify the issues in our area and to come together as people of faith to create change. When our connectivity is being pulled apart and the “air is toxic” to the values we hold as a faith community, it is important to be well informed about the issues. The hill we want to climb is bigger than us so we need this cohort to build our awareness and have a shared analysis of the problems so that we can create a network of relationships that can make a difference. We want to be a community that can build bridges over the gaps that separate us. We do not want to represent empire or become another Pharaoh, but to create community and be agents of change working together.

Eddie Carmona from PICO Sacramento set the tone by providing an historical overview of the broken immigration system. He reminded us that just as the Europeans killed the Native Americans and took their land, just as our economic system flourished on the backs of African slaves, so now the culture in this country is repeating these injustices with

our treatment of immigrants. They are considered “other.” Our laws are set up to use immigrant labor for the profit of large corporations. The people in power are doing what they have always done, using others for profit and blaming the victims declaring one group less than the rest of us. The immigration laws have been set up to see newcomers as a threat to white Americans. Trade treaties have been created to rob Mexico of its corn devastating its farm economy and to provide labor for American interests without living-wage pay for workers. When we devastate economies of our southern neighbors, we increase the flow north. Our news outlets create duality (Us and Them) and our courts create a system to hold law over the care of people. Our southern neighbors often have a choice between death and starvation or to come to the U.S.

The workshop also provided a real life story of people in these situations. One person was from the Alameda Rapid Response Team who helps migrants that are caught in the immigration system. Contra Costa also has such a Team. The other was a woman whose life had been threatened many times by gangs in Honduras and who chose to travel in one of the caravans to come to the U.S. seeking safety. She had horror stories of what it was like being in detention. She came to give witness for those who died along the way.

They also gave testimony of the trauma of children separated from their parents. These little ones feel abandoned by their parents and are unable to understand the situation. Through this process we have created a generation of traumatized lost children under 18. Who knows what violence will be had from these lost

souls when they become adults. Workshop leaders also pointed out that when one becomes a citizen, one often takes on the attitude of the culture, separating oneself from the people of the country of origin. They take on the attitude of the oppressor and renounce their own brothers and sisters.

How are we in the faith community showing up for these brothers and sisters? What can we do to effect humane systems? “We have to be hard on systems and soft on people”, said the trainers. We have to work to change inhumane systems and bring forgiveness to the perpetrators. We have to unite as people of faith to act on behalf of suffering people.

The Fourth Report

The fourth Contra Costa Clergy Cohort was held on May 15. The topic was IMPLICIT BIAS, a popular term in today’s studies on racism. Each person is different and sees the world through their upbringing and experiences. The question is: Can I step into another’s suffering without arrogance or any attempt to control the situation? Am I willing to be changed by another’s experience?

Racism gets looked at as a people of color problem when it is not. We are all formed around core needs (food shelter and security). We all have bias, a blind spot. We do not know what we do not know. This is not so much a character flaw as the way we are socialized from childhood. The definition of implicit bias from the Stanford study is “Unconscious assumptions that are socialized and ingrained; thoughts or feelings about people that can influence our actions which we are unaware of.”

We take in stimuli and arrange it with certain characteristics. One can have love of God and deep compassion for other human beings and still unknowingly see groups in certain biased ways. The information we receive on a daily basis affects how we view things, how social policy is made and how our institutions function. We tend to categorize and stereotype different groups in four categories: the pitied out-group (sick and suffering, children ravaged by war, etc), the esteemed in-group (our own), the envied out-group (the rich and famous), and the despised out-group (homeless, felons, welfare queens, etc.).

Prejudice comes from our own experience. Racism is prejudice plus power. One group has the power to carry out systematic racism. An example is the prison system which incarcerates far more blacks than whites compared to the general population. How do we as people of faith challenge this? How do I widen my circle and challenge the implicit bias in our institutions and our society? It is not so much what we need to do as who we need to become. We need to be in close proximity to people in pain.

There are four kinds of racism: individual, institutional, cultural and structural. Implicit bias is complicit with and creates unconscious racism. We need to step forward from our comfort zone and become a bridge across difference. We need to make time for bridging. No one is coming to change this situation. We, ourselves, have to initiate the change to build a beloved community. We need to say to others, “I cannot see my blindness. I cannot hear your criticism. Can you

help me?” Our stories influence how we approach situations. Whatever stimuli we don’t have about a situation, our implicit bias fills in.

In order to make a difference we need to go through a four step process. The first is encounter. We need to meet and listen to those in pain. The second is disruption. Our way of seeing things gets challenged. The third is reimagining a world that is different, where we all can truly be brothers and sisters in a “beloved community.” The fourth is prophetic action. We take steps to witness to this new world. We need to be intentional about the encounters, able to face disruption, creative in reimagining and clear on our prophetic actions. We can start this process by creating “bridging circles”, safe places where people of different experiences can share and listen to one another. One way to learn about one’s own implicit bias is by taking the Harvard Implicit Bias Test available on Google.



Each week there are countless individuals who offer themselves in service to our community: those who arrive early each Saturday morning at

6:00 a.m. to clean and prepare the church and parish hall for the weekend: **Thelma & Reno Benasfre, Alfred Madoshi, Angela Bueno, Nina Bourain, Mency Osborne, Jean Rogers, and Emilia Freking.**

...those who clean and maintain the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall throughout the week: **Nancy Santos, Rose Salamanca, Steve Rojek, and Father Robert.**

...to **Dilcia Aparicio** who does such an excellent job of washing, ironing, and caring for the Sacred Linens.

...to our Sacristans and Altar Guild who prepare the sanctuary for the celebration of Eucharist each week:

Peter Degl’Innocenti, Pam and Rich Confetti, Vincent Rodriguez, Harlan Young, Monika Kauer, Cynthia Enrique, Nancy Santos and Rose Salamanca.

...to **our counting teams** who are here every week to count the weekly collections.

...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week:

Frances Rojek, Mel Costanza, Maryann Peddicord, Estrella Rusk, Rowena Cayaban, Alicia Perez, Joe Fanfa, Bev Iacona and Paul Riofski.

...to our St. Vincent de Paul and Mobile Mall volunteers who transported last week’s donations: **Frank Zamora and Barbara Jackson.**

...to our faithful weekly bulletin assembly team: **Dave Costanza (Lead), Carole Miller, Vangie Parrilla, Beth Enea, Richard Enea, Kathy Augusta and Vince Augusta.**

...to our wonderful Parking Lot Security who keeps watch over our vehicles during the weekend Liturgies: **Don Benson, Steve Rojek and Tony Gumina.**



Opening The Doors To Faith

Last Saturday, the members of the Leadership of our parish: The Pastoral Staff, The Pastoral Council, and Finance Council, met to reflect on the seventh and last Chapter of Fr. James Mallon's book, ***Divine Renovation: Moving The Parish From Maintenance To Mission.*** Our conversations were honest, transparent, open, and challenging. The last chapter of Fr. Mallon's book focuses on "Leadership." Our goal is to make every person in our parish a "missionary disciple." The celebration of our 40th Anniversary as a parish offers us the opportunity to discern the direction our parish has taken in the past, where we are presently, and to chart the course for the future. Rather than prepare a Strategic Plan for the next 40 years, or the next 20 years, or even the next 10 years, we are going to discern how God is calling us to go forward for the next 5 years.

Without knowing that we had met and what we discussed, Fr. Richard preached a very powerful homily on "Opening The Doors To Faith" and the suggestion as to how we might consider going forward in the near future in order to build relationships, increase our knowledge of one another, deepening our understanding and appreciation of one another's language, culture, and faith experience. The homily concluded

with three steps that can "be repeated as necessary."

The Leadership of the parish will meet again on Saturday, June 29th, from 9:00 a.m. to Noon to continue this exciting conversation and to begin to put together the pieces for going forward and "Opening The Doors to Faith."

Charter Member's Brunch

We could not have known forty years ago, when St. Ignatius of Antioch was first organized, that such good times were in our stars! How little did we realize the rewards of faith and hard work would actually come to us! Last Sunday's Charter Members' Brunch was that moment, when we gave thanks, prayed, laughed, and raised our glasses to ourselves, our pastors, and to those beloved founders gone before us. Though we are still a work in progress and always will be, we stopped the clock long enough to reflect upon the "bricks" of accomplishment in Erika Fernandes' cupcake monument, to sit and feast together, and to let the Mumm's tickle our noses.

The event was imagined last summer and grew in momentum as the 40th Anniversary Committee gained recognition with photos, events and published prayers to share. Efforts to identify and contact the Charter Members took several months, but Marla Plurkowski's elegant invitations went out early April, and frequent check-ins with Maryann Peddicord and Frances Rojek in the office, kept us abreast of the enthusiastic responses. Finally, an environment only to be described as the Magic of Marla, transformed the plain social area Saturday night into a festival setting for 65, replete with silky white

linens, perky golden mums in ribboned crocks, party favors, and lemon and teal accent napkins. Her joyful banner together with the menu board met our party-goers, but arrested their attention until only a few steps later, when they saw what jolly Bob Plurkowski was pouring for them!

The menu was full American breakfast, and then some: Reggie's deviled eggs; and prepared by Catherine and Will, frittata with applewood bacon; Parkside New York sausage; "Holy Ground" cream of carrot soup; breakfast potatoes; fresh Brentwood strawberries and cara cara oranges; Cecchini farms asparagus from Discovery Bay; smoked salmon mousse; Big House Beans coffee; Panera sweet and savory breads; assorted juices and sparklers; and the life of the party-- never ending Mumm's champagne! Father Robert offered a Grace that none of us will ever forget, and though he was not with us in the beginning, it bespoke our joys, trials, and history. Will and Catherine thank Marla and the committee for so readily supporting the idea of the party. Reggie Desmond, Steve Rojek, Kathleen Maasberg, Rachelle Martin, and Lorraine Lohmeier provided good humor and tireless, hands-on attention to our many dishes, but most of all to our guests! Will and Catherine thank our Charter Members, once again and forever more, for being the village that helped us to raise our family. We did not want to wash your fingerprints and lip prints from the flutes, wishing we could have made the celebration last and last!

God bless us every one!
Catherine E. Vidaurri

