

OIKOUMENE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMISSION FOR ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY, NY

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*OIKOUMENE IS GREEK FOR "HOUSE" "FAMILY" "PEOPLE" "NATION" "OPEN TO OR PARTICIPATING IN THE WHOLE INHABITED WORLD" AND IS THE SOURCE OF OUR WORD "ECUMENICAL," BUT HAS A BROADER SENSE. [PER ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA]

July 31st = My 38th Anniversary as your Director

"From the Desk of the Director"

Dear Clergy, Religious & Lay Friends,

Yet another victim of Covid-19 was my traditional newsletter during the Pentecost novena.

Much sadder is the loss of 2 ecumenical colleagues to the coronavirus: Rev. Dr. Gregg Mast, past pastor of 1st Church in Albany, who at our diocesan sesquicentennial celebration told the story of the first pastor of his church, giving sanctuary to St. Isaac Jogues; and Rev. Dr. Al Janssen, past ecumenical officer for the local Reformed Church America, who, along with Fr. Dennis Tamburello of Siena, were members of the national Reformed-R.C. Dialogue.

"True dialogue and especially interfaith dialogue...is so important for our society today. We continue to have much to learn." -Fr. Mark Reamer, OFM

"...Successful ecumenism is all about relationship building. For those to whom Christian unity matters most in their everyday relationships, progress seems slow. Still, they can pray for the restoration of Christian unity, and they can form relationships across church lines. For the greater the unity of Christians, the better the world knows the Gospel. Not everyone can explain subtle differences in doctrine that keep Christians apart, but everyone can move this pilgrimage toward the final in-gathering of Christians." -Dr. John Borelli (Georgetown U.)

THANK YOU to our Vicar General, Fr. Bob Longobucco, for his active involvement in the "Schenectady Clergy Against Hate Coalition," especially during this racial tension time. THANK YOU to our Vicar General, Fr. David LeFort, for his active involvement in the Covenant between our Cathedral and the Episcopal Cathedral of All Saints.

"The Catholic Church has an irrevocable commitment to the Jewish community. This commitment is clear and straightforward: Anti-Semitism is Anti-Christian and should not be tolerated in any form...We offer our prayerful support for all victims of anti-Semitic violence & their families. It is our hope that through continued respectful collaboration & dialogue with our Jewish brothers & sisters, Catholics will help build a culture that completely rejects anti-Semitism." – Bishop Joseph Bambera, Chairman, US Bishops' Committee for Ecumenism



“Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor, to the profaned riches of this world. It is a form of living, a crossing point of God & humanity. God is raging in the prophets’ words.

The prophets had disdain for those to whom God was comfort & security; to them God was a challenge, an incessant demand....The prophets tried to overcome the isolation of religion.”

-Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (*Religion in a Free Society*)

-From: PLOUGH (Spring '20): a publication of the Bruderhof

“...Two specific aspects of modern Roman Catholicism that I admire: the revolutionary change in the Church’s relationship with the Jewish people & Judaism, and its remarkable & steadfast commitment to social justice. Those 2 areas of human engagement represent 2 of Catholicism’s crown jewels. They are too important, too significant, too vital to be diminished, or, God forbid, relegated to the ecclesiastical dustbins of history....Indeed, since 1965 (*Nostra Aetate*) there have been more positive encounters between Catholics & Jews than there were during the first 1,900 years of the R.C.C” -Rabbi James Rudin (author of Cushing, Spellman, O’Connor: The Surprising Story of How 3 American Cardinals Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations)

From that book: “There is no Christian rationale - neither theological nor historical – for any iniquity, hatred or persecution of our Jewish brothers (& sisters)...In this our age [of the Holocaust] how many have died because of the indifference of Christians, because of silence!” (Richard Cardinal Cushing, at Vatican II)

“I will never tire of condemning every form of anti-Semitism....We must commit ourselves also to tilling the soil in which hatred grows and sowing peace instead.” –Pope Francis (1/20/20)

Miguel Cardinal Guixot, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, has joined other Christian, Muslim & Jewish leaders in calling for February 4 to be declared World Day of Human Fraternity.

On the Dedication of the R.C. Church of Our Lady of Cold Spring –

From: New-York Weekly Register & Catholic Diary - November 15, 1834

“We could not help cherishing the hope that the erection of this chaste and elegant little building, might form the commencement of an era of good will among all religious denominations. It seemed to us like the temple of peace, as the shrine where all worship the same God, and depend for salvation, on the same Savior, might come and lay down that load of un-Christian antipathies which has separated mankind into inveterate factions and deluged the earth with blood....Mr. Kemble (who donated the land & \$) is a Protestant, and so are we; but this shall not prevent our bearing testimony to the liberal and philanthropic spirit, which, overlooking the metaphysical refinements of religion, resorts to its spirit & essence & recognize all the worshipers of one Creator and one Savior of the world, as fellow creatures and fellow Christians, who, however they may differ in modes and forms, look up to the same eternal source in this life, and the life everlasting.” –quoted in Fr. Rick Shaw’s book: John Dubois



“It would not be right to say to the members of the Armenian nation, ‘Forget the massacres of 1915’ or to the Jewish people, ‘Forget the Shoah in the II World War.’ These are matters that, for the sake of our shared humanity, none of us should forget, not least so as to ensure that such atrocities may never be allowed to happen again...Remember the past but do not be held captive by it. Turn it into a blessing, not a curse; a source of hope, not humiliation. Our memories are not to be repressed or negated, but at the same time they require to be purified and healed....” -Orthodox Metropolitan Kallistos Ware (from: The Way of Forgiveness)

Diocesan priest, Fr. Dick Vosko, shares these insights in his new book:

“Most major religions have shown an appetite for innovation in order to protect their traditions. They truly want to offer people an accessible spiritual path that would bring about a sense of purpose & hope in real time.” (pg.83)

“I hope ...that other Christian churches can...recognize new possibilities in their own buildings. This exercise is part of my search for a common ground that will bring many different congregations and faith traditions together. Proselytism is not intended. I am mindful of the admonition of Gordon Lathrop: ‘In the quest for Christian unity, we cannot simply insist on our discipline for other churches...[but] in the quest for renewal, we cannot avoid what is to be renewed.’ Lathrop argues that diversity in liturgical practice does not deter the search for unity among Christian groups. A common ground really has no boundaries.” (pg. 181)

“In a practical way, before selling a stable but empty building, different faiths in the same municipality could work together to explore ways to convert their building into a community center. Cooperation among different faith traditions could also serve to gradually heal unnecessary breaches among people of different faith traditions who share the same interest in making a difference in the world.” (pg.224) –Art & Architecture for Congregational Worship

“We can take part in social struggles without noting the dogmas of others. In this way, the Church strengthens its position and influence. We are worthy of our past when we are relevant to the present.” -Greek Orthodox Archbishop Metropolitan of N.A. – Elpidophoros
-Via News Service of Greece

Notes: The archbishop declared Fri., July 24, a day of mourning, the first day of Muslim prayers at the Byzantine cathedral & UNESCO World Heritage site of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, following its recent conversion into a mosque.

On June 3rd at Noon the nation’s Orthodox bishops joined with our USCCB in silence & prayer.

At an Albany County Interfaith Coalition Prayer Service on June 4th, I shared these statements:

“Where the police power of the state is not subject to restraint and the rule of equal treatment under the law, that man, black or white, could be you or me, Christian Muslim, or Jewish. In pursuit of justice, all must ante up.” -Bishop Edward Scharfenberger

“Hopefully...[this current crisis]...offers the opportunity for substantial progress that will not only place a bandaid on the present wound, but lead to a resolution of the racism & Xenophobia which for far too long have had a chilling and negative effect in achieving the American ideal of justice, equality, dignity and fairness for all...I pray fervently that this will be the ultimate and hard-won permanent solution to American’s original sin.” -Bishop Emeritus Howard Hubbard



At that same service:

“Hopefully this [time] will unite us to not only get rid of the pandemic of coronavirus, but the pandemic of racist injustice & discrimination.” -Imam Djafer Sebkhauoui

“Lead us into the light and keep us forever in the path of prayer. We thank you God for rainbows of people that populate our world.” -Rev. Dr. Roxanne Jones-Booth (who also shared insights on racism in an “Our neighbors’ Faith” column in The Evangelist – 7/9/20)

“It is part of our mission and ministry that each day prayers should be offered in this cathedral church for peace & justice and for the good of the city...We will pray for all victims of injustice & violence not known to us but known to God.”

-Very Rev. Dr. Leander Harding, Dean of the Episcopal Cathedral of All Saints, Albany

“Enrich the treasure of the Church with the experience of those who don’t walk with us.”

-Fr. Toma Halik (priest of Prague)

In this time of limited travel, add this to your local sites to visit:

The (Japanese Buddhist) Peace Pagoda, in Grafton Park – 1 of only 2 in the U.S.

Did you know that 21 years after the JOINT DECLARATION ON THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION between the Vatican & the World Lutheran Federation, it remains the only officially-received, bilateral Agreement between the R.C.C. & a Reformation church?

“We have separated over the Bible and over the Bible we must reunite.” –Cardinal Kasper

“The world needs an ecumenical movement that offers an alternative vision of world order based on cooperation and solidarity, a vision of God’s promised Reign marked by dignity of all humanity, and the integrity of creation...The idea of pilgrimage shifts the ecumenical focus away from structures toward life together on the way. It also shifts the focus away from static completion (Are we united yet? Have we achieved our social/ethical goals?) toward movement with one another in the direction God is leading...Our final word is one of hope, which may be ecumenism’s distinctive trait...Those who live in hope give thanks for what God can and will accomplish, regardless of how difficult the present may seem. The fact that ecumenically-minded Christians can no longer revel in institutional success might just drive us back to the revitalizing realization that if the movement moves it is because of the power of God.”

“Towards a More Responsive & Inclusive Ecumenical Vision”

- Report of the Antelias Consultation (2/20)

“The Capital Region’s Jewish community is grief stricken. We stand in solidarity with our Black brothers & sisters in the Jewish community and beyond...The Jewish community rejects racism and bigotry in all its forms in our society...we express our respect & empathy for every human being as we are taught that each person is created ‘B’Tzelem Elohim’ (‘in the sacred image of God’)...Our tradition teaches: ‘Do not stand idly by while your neighbor bleeds.’ (Leviticus 19:16)



“As fellow brothers & sisters in humanity, we are profoundly concerned and saddened by the aforementioned crimes as well as other incidents of racism, xenophobia, and the infringement of God-given rights...Regardless of our race or religion, we must work together, ‘E pluibus unum’ (the U.S. motto: ‘out of many, one’), with every institution and organization willing, including millions in the law enforcement community, to heal the sickness of racism that has been inflicting immense and long-lasting pain on our country...Allah, the Almighty, sanctifies every human life...” -Imams & Boards of the mosques in the Capital Region

“All humanity is descended from Adam & Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab... also a white has no superiority over a black...except by piety & good action.”

-Muhammad’s last sermon: on Mt. Arafat – 632 AD

Did you know that May 14 was a day of prayer, fasting, and acts of charity to ask God to stop the coronavirus pandemic? The day of prayer was called for by the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, an international group of religious leaders formed after Pope Francis & Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of al-Azhar University (Egypt) signed a document in 2019 promoting “human fraternity” (and calling for an observing of that every Feb. 4th)

“...This moment beckons us to a renewed commitment to realize the ideal of *E Pluribus Unum* -‘out of many, one ‘ – the very ideal upon which America was founded...Religion, an enduring source of insight concerning human purpose & action, has a key role to play in this process. All faith communities recognize that we are essentially spiritual beings. All proclaim some version of the ‘Golden Rule’ – to love others as we do ourselves...Baha’u’llah said, ‘So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.’ May that light grow brighter with every passing day,” -“Forging a Path to Justice”: a Message from the Baha’is of the United States

“In our divided and divisive world, even we Christians can get caught up in the judgment game, blaming others and claiming victory for ourselves. This holier-than-thou attitude isn’t restricted to one viewpoint or side; it’s an equal opportunity offender. It is really the devil at work. When followers of Jesus are divided among themselves, it leaves room for evil to seep, or, at the very least, for chasms of disagreement to widen. We fight with each other and, in the process, the people ‘out there’ look at us and wonder why anyone would want to join us.”

-Mary DeTurrus Poust “Rejoice & Be Glad” Reflections booklet (Easter to Pentecost ’20)

“The next time you see divisions rising up among believers, take a step back and notice if the division is a distraction or a dire need. If it’s the former, make a decision not to participate in the mudslinging and instead do something positive...May we be forces for unity and work to heal the divisions that tear families, communities, churches apart.” -Ibid.

“...I pledge to promote to the best of my ability friendship, understanding, empathy, compassion, and expressions of love and acceptance for all people...”

-Edith Leet (Ecumenical Representative – American Baptists) “A White Person’s Pledge”

Fr. Jim Kane



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