

Call to  
Action of  
Michigan



# Newsletter Fall 2011 - Winter 2012



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## Editor's Essay

After almost 35 years of working on church reform, I am sorely disappointed. God sent his Son, Jesus, to reveal the essence of the God-Head and he did a good job. The early Christians captured the core of His message and demonstrated great courage in living and teaching the Gospel. Yes, the Word was delivered but since the first centuries of Christianity, very little has been accomplished. Things were so bad a thousand years ago that St. Francis of Assisi was told, "Go Francis, and repair my church which, as you see, is falling into ruin." John the 23rd called for *aggiornamento* but all he got was *pimiento*—a little color and spice but no real lasting change and renewal.

Now come the Holidays and people want to feel good and get a sprinkle of religion. I sense this in the malls while shopping, but it turns me off. It is while working as a volunteer at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen that the phrase "the word became flesh" takes on new meaning. As I walk into the service area, there is the feeling of a sacred place. I walk to the tutoring room while others lift ladles of hot food to be poured on trays for the guests. Helping a young student with a math problem, giving food to the hungry can be seen in a biblical light: the word is made flesh again.

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## A Man for All Seasons



Arnie Messing is the 2011 "In the Spirit" award winner.

Each year Call To Action of Michigan honors a person or persons who embody the values of our organization in their daily lives – the values of inclusion, of justice, of community – a person who is a doer of God's Word. Arnie Messing is the 2011 "In the Spirit" award winner. If you don't know Arnie personally, you are probably familiar with his insightful articles in the CTA-MI newsletter. Former award winner and Anti-Death penalty advocate, Mary Hennig presented Arnie with his award at this year's state conference

Ironically, Arnie was late to the conference because he was witnessing the marriage of a young couple. He truly values his ministry as a married priest, and already has three more weddings scheduled for late Fall. Arnie has an interest in green burials and shared his knowledge as a presenter at a wakes and funeral workshop hosted by the Metro Detroit branch of CTA-MI where he also shared a wake service he prepared.

CTA-MI was proud to honor Arnie Messing with this award. We hope that Arnie will continue to be an active member of CTA and we are grateful that he does not hide his light under a bushel basket.

*-- Eileen Burns*

## *The Mission of Call to Action of Michigan*

*Call to Action of Michigan educates, inspires and activates Catholics to work for justice and build inclusive communities of faith through a lens of anti-oppression principles including anti-racism.*

## Washtenaw News



Washtenaw Area Call to Action met on Sunday, October 30th, in our rental space at "Genesis of Ann Arbor."

Our liturgy theme was: "Saints. Do We Still Need Them??" The presentation by Rosemary Rader and Judi Pawloski was excellent. It included a lively group discussion of saints (dead and alive) ranging from St. Anthony (and before) to Dorothy Day and beyond.

We had 18 attendees and our contribution this month to the Back Door Food Pantry (sponsored by "Genesis") was \$66. If you were unable to attend this month, mark your calendar for next month: Sunday, November 27th!

*Margaret Pooler, VP, Washtenaw Area*

## Rochester North Metro News

CTA MI and a local Catholic charity both benefited from the purchase of a billboard at a silent auction. The illuminated billboard delivered the message, "CTA MI Living the Gospel of Love" and appeared for two months near the corner of Telegraph Road and Dixie Highway in northern Pontiac.

Joan Chittister was one of the principal speakers for the American Catholic Council (June 2011) where she encouraged those in attendance to act on their ideas for church reform and not to give up hope. Even though we may not see the changes we seek, change is in the air. Matthew Perry discussed the problem of financial accountability within the church structure in his talk which was based on his book, "Render unto Rome." DVDs of their speeches have been shared with Rochester North Metro members during their bi-monthly meetings.

Rochester North Metro meetings are held at 2:00 PM the third Sunday of alternating months. The next meeting will be January 22, at the home of Mike and Jeannie Daly.

## Lansing Branch News

Lansing was busy hosting the successful State Conference this past September.

For our monthly meeting, we listened to CD's of talks by Anthony Padovano and Joan Chittister from the American Catholic Conference held in Detroit this past June. Both talks led to very interesting discussions.

Please pray with us for our friend Karen Schrauben during her fight with cancer.

*Janet Glisson*

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## ANNUAL ELECTION

Our Call to Action-Michigan By-laws require that we elect a Vice-President in the fall to be installed after the first of the year (just like the President of the U. S.).

The Vice President is responsible for supporting our President and for replacing our President when that person is unable to fill the term. The Vice President also writes the Appeal letter in the fall and the Request for Dues Letter in the spring.

If you know anyone interested in filling this opening for two years, please inform us. We will contact them to see if they are willing to run.

Call or email us at the following:

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## Editor's Essay

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We can do that. Service to others is a great theological lesson, but it is our works that make the Word born again in our cities, families and neighborhoods. In the old days we used to walk over to the crib in church and say a prayer at Christmas. The rituals told us to receive the Eucharist with a pure heart on Christmas morning.

All that is still relevant and important. Now we see a new dimension to the Christmas story. Somehow when walking into the soup kitchen in Detroit this year, I think of the many fellow-volunteers who in their own way make real the words of John: "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The poor who come for help reveal another aspect of the mystery of Christmas. Mary and Joseph sought help in their time of need and we find this story lived out today as it was 2000 years ago. The opportunities to help are endless.



*Are you on Facebook? Would you like to share and discuss stories and events with like minded Catholics on social media? Just "search" in facebook for "Call to Action Michigan" and join the new CTA MI facebook group! Questions? E-mail: [farpoika@yahoo.com](mailto:farpoika@yahoo.com).*



## 2011 CTA Board Retreat

Sr. Pat McDonald O.P. led this year's board retreat and energized the group with her reminder, "You're IT!" Successful leaders must accept character building as a lifelong process. Good leaders must strive to see a situation clearly and to take constructive criticism well. Integrity is integrating all parts of character for success.

Take your duties as leaders seriously because the church sorely needs lay leadership. She explained, as an Adrian Dominican, she is called to be a Preacher, to Preach in order to Reach, Each.

Her retreat work with us began before our retreat when she asked us to send responses to some open ended statements to give her a bit of insight about us and our interactions as board members.

Throughout the day we had opportunities to reflect on the advantages we enjoy simply because of where we live and the educational advantages we are afforded. We also studied about forgiveness and the lack of forgiveness, characteristics which can greatly affect the quality of our lives. We have tremendous potential, but must utilize it to help ourselves and those we encounter.

Pat explained, "We are the teachers we have been waiting for." She also quoted Mark DePoe who said "To listen means to lean in attentively and be willing to be changed by what you hear."

She admonished us to bring stories of hope and to preach the gospel always, and if necessary, use words.

Our day ended with much discussion of what we can do to make our group more appealing to younger members and ways to publicize our events which will help us draw in more Catholics who currently feel homeless or unwelcome.

*Jeannie Daly*

### *Book Review:*

## **Letters to Pope Benedict** (Trafford, 2011),

*by John Kinkel*

What a novel idea. Ask the people who are most affected by change in the church to share their ideas with the pope. What change is needed or even wanted? Who would have thought our sons and daughters might have the answers? Certainly not the leadership of the Catholic Church. This is what John Kinkel has done. He asked the college students in his classes between the years 2007 and 2010 to write a letter to the pope. He then compiled them into his newest book Letters to Pope Benedict.

There is a wide range of religious beliefs, opinions, and social backgrounds represented here. And, unlike the church, both genders are represented. The common thread throughout these letters is the fact that most of the

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## From the President ...



As president of CTA of MI please accept my warmest greetings for a happy, healthy holiday season. We have had a very busy year including demonstrations in support of Fr. Roy Bourgeois and for women and married men to be accepted as full members of the priesthood.

To that end, my correspondence with the Archbishop of Detroit Alan Vigneron continues. In my last letter to the Archbishop I commended his expression of support for immigrants through his "Free Press" editorial and for his solidarity with other local religious leaders when Rev. Terry Jones visited with his inflammatory and disrespectful treatment of the Qur'an. I did suggest to him, however, that his condemnation rather than participation in the American Catholic Council was a missed opportunity to learn what the ideas and suggestions the laity would like to offer their church. My letter accompanied a stole from the ACC closing mass which CTA members blessed for him at our annual summer picnic. The work of the Spirit is powerful and the fact that the Archbishop answered my letter is a sign that at least there is some communication.

The priest shortage hit home in July when my brother's funeral mass was led by a priest my niece met in her music store. My brother's parish in Peshtigo, WI and the surrounding parishes do NOT have a priest.

Imagine what could be accomplished if our church would allow former Catholic priests who have married and ordained women to serve. We are not even allowed to speak of this, witness the plight of Fr. Roy Bourgeois. (Fr. Roy met with CTA members in Milwaukee at CTA's National Conference and he continues to speak for women's ordination.)

Jamie Manson, one of CTA MI's annual conference speakers in September was featured as the opening keynote speaker in Milwaukee. She discussed the church 'in the margins', those who do not feel included in the Church. About 40 CTA members from Michigan gathered for our state caucus just prior to Jamie's address.

Catholic social teaching demands that we fight oppression and institutions which continue unjust practices, but our church leaders apparently cannot see themselves as oppressors. Perhaps the Roman Missal translation and how it came about will prove to be a good enough reason for more lay people to contact local parish priests and express their objections or perhaps create intentional communities.

CTA-MI is working to welcome younger members through more effective use of technology. We are also working with Kathy O'Bee, widow of the late Jerry O'Bee, to once again have a branch in Grand Rapids.

Enjoy your holidays and share your warmth with those in need.

*Jeannie Daly*

## **Book Review: Letters to Pope Benedict**

*Continued from page 3*

writers are searching for a meaningful spirituality. Whether the letter is from a Protestant brother, an upstart sister, or a Catholic seminarian, it is plain to see that these people are searching for a deeper understanding of what God means to each of us.

Both the anger and the frustration in many of the letters are real. Yet, through all of the letters, the good done by the church is neither negated nor relegated to a lesser position than it deserves. Perhaps attention should be paid to *sensus fidelium* of the local church.

This book doesn't answer all of the questions of church renewal nor should it. What this book does is beg to have the questions raised and answered. The leadership of the Catholic Church would do well to give some serious thought to the questions that were posed by the student letters. Just imagine what it would be like to have Dr. Kinkel's next book be *Letters From Pope Benedict*. —Jerry Schoof [The book can be ordered from [Trafford.com](http://Trafford.com) or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]

### **WHO IS CHRIST: A DIALOGUE.**

The evolving Christ? The recent essay, "Response to New Trends in Religious Life," by Sr. Ilia Delio, of the Union of the Superiors General, Rome, Italy, caught the eye of some CTA members. Why? She says, in part, that Christ is trying to break through our universe to be born again. We must be the midwives. Her Franciscan training taught her the importance of the Incarnation and inherent goodness of the world. She asks: can we build a new world with people of good will (Catholics and non) so that God's loving presence can shine forth in the world. The evolution to a new way is already happening: people are creating new relationships that meet the needs of the universe. Christ is at work doing that through people who experience a change of heart and transform the world through personal conversion. The world is God's gift to us, she says, and let's cherish it. What a great message for the Holidays. [Editor's note].

***Comment by Beth Rindler:*** When I read the article by Ilia Delio, my thoughts turned to both the new Macomb CTA Branch and the Washtenaw Chapter. I feel Ilia is addressing her remarks to people like us who are members of the many social movements and women's religious orders within the Church.

However, as I read further, I see what she is really talking about is in the new Spirit that is transforming CTA in small cells throughout the USA and Michigan. Being in relationship with all of you makes me think we are living the point of her article: build a new world by joining Christ's transforming presence.

Michael Morwood has discussed similar points in CTA meetings. Therefore, I believe we are experiencing new life and dedication through the work of CTA members. Ilia has opened our eyes to evolutionary Christianity.

*Beth Rindler (bethrin@prodigy.net)*

***Comment by Cheryl Smith*** - I am a long-time Franciscan at heart and have had numerous, wondrous Franciscan mentors. I love what Ilia is describing. I have been trying to tune-in to the current Evolutionary Christianity movement and it sounds like she is really tuned-in to it. "The most significant mark of our age is evolution. We live in an ancient, dynamic and expanding universe with a future of trillions of years. It is an incomplete universe in which Christ is still coming to be. Christ the evolver is Christ the Omega Point, the goal of the universe. We humans are the self-conscious universe; hence our choices and actions shape the future of the universe.... Because we are the universe in evolution we feel, as Franciscans, that we must engage the world in its secularity because it is in the world and not apart from it, that God is coming to birth in this evolving universe."

I also so appreciate her understanding that "Our goal is not to speak about Jesus Christ, preach the Gospel or try to convert others. Rather it is striving for peace and wholeness within our own lives and then going about the world as "whole makers," which we consider is the dynamic of catholicity, that is, to help make people whole where there are divisions." If we can do that just a little bit better by coming together to gain support, insight and faithful sharing, we are all more the Christ....and yes, Jesus is the Christ, but "Christ" is much more than Jesus, according to Sr. Ilia. Recently, I spent a week with Fr. Michael Crosby OFM, Cap. and he taught this same lesson in the most powerful way I have ever heard and it has grown in my heart.

Christ includes every person, every creature and the whole universe. The fullness of Christ is in the rich diversity of creation. This belief influences our going about the world. Ours is not to preach the Gospel with words nor is it to exhibit an exclusive Catholic identity; rather as persons committed to the Gospel, we are to live the Gospel in humility and simplicity. We believe every person carries the Word of God Incarnate, that the light of Christ shines from within every person (regardless of religion or no religion), every creature, every living star, atom, every living aspect of this vibrant universe. Our role is to serve as midwives to the goodness of God incarnate already in our midst—to be "mother" and "sister." By doing so, Christ becomes the reality of our world not as doctrine or religious formulae but as the living reality of divine goodness in our midst.

Thanks so much for sending this article, Sr. Beth, and it would be great to pull out some of the most striking points for each of us and share how we can keep this vision in the forefront of our little church.

*Love, Cheryl Smith, Macomb Branch.*

## CTA National Meetings, 2011

Sociologist and priest Andrew Greeley stated some years ago that the 'ole guard' Catholic activists were change makers, whereas the new guard just talk about change. It is hard to argue with the priest from Chicago after Milwaukee's rendition of church reform under the banner of "Living the Gospel of Love."

Sure there were great talks (Borg). The prayer services were inspiring and the Gospel singers from All Saints parish got us all excited and convinced. We met old friends and talked into the night about good times and fine wine. But what is next? Another plaque for a liberal Catholic? More undying support for a sister, priest or bishop that speaks out against church oppression? Let's start facing reality.

People have left the Catholic Church in unprecedented numbers, not because they are sinners, but rather they sense there is something drastically wrong in the Roman Catholic Church and they want no part of it. Catholic power brokers have driven the car into the ditch. There is no indication that they have learned their lesson and are willing to change their ways.

This tells us that we must act decisively and take our Catholic faith in a new direction. We should stop asking bishops and priests to listen and change. That is hopeless. We are clueless if we think otherwise.

What groups like CTA and the American Catholic Council must do is look to the future and set up structures to deal with present and future contingencies.

What I would like to see is a plan to build and staff Catholic seminaries for women in key regions in the U.S. Faced with discrimination in the early 1900's women who wanted to be doctors set up their own medical schools so that they could become doctors and serve people in need. Women who want to become priests in the modern world must get the best training possible so that in the next 5 years Catholics will have men and women to staff the new reform Catholic churches that are emerging each year. We should ordain those who qualify and build a church for our young people, married couples and their families, and the veteran reformers who have worked so hard to get change and help from the intractable clerical bosses.

We have to act now, not because we are frustrated, but we need to save a whole generation of young people who cannot find a home in the Catholic Church. Talk is fine. Proposals are good. But let's act and build a future that will follow the lead of Paul the Apostle: "I have fought the good fight, I have run the race, I have kept the faith." There are some in the Catholic Church who cannot say that.

*John Kinkel*

## Fr. Roy Bourgeois Update

Fr. Roy Bourgeois continues to serve the Church as a member of the Maryknoll community of priests and brothers, even though he has been threatened with dismissal by his order after the community received pressure from Rome to do so. As many know, the reason he was excommunicated and faces dismissal from the order centers on his support of women's ordination.

Fr. Roy is a dedicated cleric who has stated publicly that he sees no reason why women should be denied ordination in the Roman Catholic Church. Even though he has been ordered to recant his position, he insists he cannot do so without violating his conscience.

It appears that Fr. Roy's public words and actions are influencing some clerics to stand in solidarity with him. A significant number of Marknoll priests have requested that their brother not be dismissed from the order.

After encouragement from CTA, about 200 priests in the USA have signed a petition to show their solidarity with him in following his conscience.

On October 17, 2011, Fr. Roy traveled to the Vatican, accompanied by his Dominican canon lawyer, Fr. Thomas Doyle, various representatives from the Women's Ordination Conference, several women priests, and members of Call to Action. They brought with them 15,000 signed petitions of support to deliver to the men in the Vatican. Officials at the Vatican refused to meet with Roy and his attorney. Surprisingly, Roy and two others were briefly detained by Italian police.

Hopefully, Fr. Roy's public expression of his belief that women as well as men can be called to the priesthood will beget some open and honest discussion as to why the Roman Catholic Church maintains that its stand on women's ordination is an infallible teaching and thus Roy is accused of rejecting core doctrines of the Catholic Church.



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By your membership you are standing with Call to Action's mission for justice and equality. CTA-MI members will receive three newsletters yearly and a discount on our yearly state conference.

With a combined membership you will also receive CTA-USA award winning publications and a discount to the national conference. (The Michigan Chapter of Call To Action is a separately incorporated local organization.)

- \$25 CTA-MI Individual chapter membership     This is a renewal  
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