

# The Advocate

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Father Brandon Nguyen

## Father Brandon Nguyen: A Storyteller's Story

By: Jack Sullivan

The Rev. Brandon Bay Nguyen, C.S.Sp, Associate Pastor of OLQP, is known by parishioners for his homilies that often contain stories and sometimes jokes to get his point across. A self-acknowledged storyteller, Father Brandon's own story is itself a compelling odyssey, born out of warfare that has brought him to OLQP.

Fr. Brandon was twelve years old when Communist forces from the North took the city of Saigon and the South Vietnamese government fell after decades of conflict. His parents were part of the Catholic migration from the North that came South after the partition of the country that occurred in 1954. A fisherman, his father resettled the Nguyen (pronounced "win") family in an oceanside village and there Brandon Bay was born.

Three years after the fall of Saigon — now Ho Chi Minh City — Fr. Brandon, with two brothers and a sister, encouraged by their parents who feared their sons being drafted into the Vietnamese Army, left their homeland.

"This was a fishing village," Father Brandon remembered. "There were lots of boats around, and it was not unusual for people to leave." Traveling South by boat in international waters, he and his siblings with 17 other people on the boat, found an oil rig off Malaysia, sought help, and were taken to a refugee camp in that country.

After 14 months in the camp, the four Nguyens were resettled in Portland, Oregon, where Fr. Brandon finished high school and subsequently went to college in California, obtaining an engineering degree. He also obtained American citizenship in 1988 and adopted "Brandon" as his "American" name. "My brother brought home a kung fu movie that starred Bruce Lee's son named Brandon. I liked the name and used it on my application for naturalization," Fr. Brandon explained. As he progressed with his education and a subsequent four-year career

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working as a quality engineer with a California firm, Fr. Brandon was hearing God's call to the priesthood. "This began when I was a boy. If Saigon had not fallen, I would have entered the minor seminary at twelve," he noted.

In 1993, after confiding his interest in the priesthood to a Redemptorist priest, he was sent to a diocesan seminary in Houston, Texas. There he met Spiritan priests and missionaries — a role to which he aspired, and he chose that order. After finishing his seminary training, he was ordained a priest on November 11, 2000 — just over 15 years ago.

The Order then sent him on a series of assignments. "First I went to a Spiritan parish in Conway, Arkansas, for four years, then to Our Lady of the Valley in Hemet, California, for about a year, then to Chicago for training and work in formation as a novice director for four years, and then to Houston for two years as a vocation director." In 2012, in a move that caused concern to his family in the United States, Fr. Brandon was asked to return to Vietnam.

Because of the political situation that still exists in that country, Fr. Brandon is reluctant to speak too openly about his work in Vietnam where he lived outside Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) in a Spiritan "house" where formation work goes on. He noted, however, that an agreement between the Communist leaders and the Vatican allows the Church in Vietnam to appoint its own hierarchy and generally conduct its work without government interference.

After two years in Vietnam, he was brought back to the United States and assigned to help Fr. Tim Hickey in Arlington. Fr. Brandon describes his months at OLQP as an "overwhelming and profound" experience, a Catholic community unusual even among Spiritan parishes. "Queen of Peace is distinctive for its diversity and its outreach efforts," he said. As he settled into the role of Associate Pastor, Fr. Brandon has attempted to understand all the ministries of the parish and he finds the task daunting. "I keep working at it, but new ones regularly seem to be added," he noted.

Asked about his storytelling, he explained: "For years now, I have been collecting stories, including jokes, that can help illuminate the Scriptures, make them more meaningful to the average Catholic who may not have much theological background." He obtains his stories

from friends, from the Internet and other sources. "Sometimes in giving a homily I have not intended to tell a story but in the midst of speaking it will come to me like a flash as very relevant to the point I am trying to make. So I use it," he said.

One parishioner has told him that he could have a second profession as a stand up comedian. But that is not how Fr. Brandon sees it. "The stories, even the jokes, have a serious intent," he asserts. OLQP parishioners obviously can look forward to hearing many more stories from this Vietnamese fisherman's son who became our Associate Pastor.



### Editor's Note

By: Paula Cruickshank

Happy New Year! The winter issue of the Advocate spotlights our new Associate Pastor, Fr. Brandon Nguyen, and our new Youth Minister, Mike Mothes. Find out about their faith journeys and why they love to be a part of OLQP. Don't miss the article on OLQP's newest ministry, Building Forever Families, which advocates on behalf of children in foster care and offers a mentor program for prospective adoptive and foster parents. Our labor column previews a February 8 event on human trafficking. Other articles explain the impact of Fr. Ray Hall renovations on church ministries, how a new computer program got off the ground in Medford, Haiti, and the importance of peacemaking in the face of violence and war. There are also great photos from two recent events: the Minkisi retreat and the annual Unity Mass/Day of Reflection.

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## New Youth Minister Shares Story as “Lifelong Learner”

By: Bobby McMahon

Talk with Mike Mothes about the path that brought him to OLQP, and he'll tell you a lot about all that he's learned from the people on his journey.

“Being a lifelong learner has taught me the importance of being non-judgmental, an active listener, and really that each person has the ability, with the help of their Higher Power, to live a life of integrity and gratitude. This applies to me as well. The best I can do is to live out my own truth as a social worker, a teacher, a substance abuse counselor, or a youth and young adult minister,” Mike said.

Mike joined the parish staff in April as the parish's youth minister and has hit the ground running in his new post. You may have seen Mike corralling youngsters during OLQP's 70th Anniversary Celebration, or working with parish teens to call attention to the human costs of gun violence as part of Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath in December. For those who enjoy a good scare, parish youth under Mike's watch unleashed their creativity to put together a haunted house for Halloween.

“I have always been drawn to working with young people,” Mike said, noting both their palpable energy and inspiring creativity. He said he is grateful to join them on their spiritual path, be it during good times or bad.

“The way young people express themselves, connect with others, test out life, and come into being

the people they are meant to be is just amazing to witness,” he said.

Mike's path of learning and service has stretched the United States. His service in Jesuit Volunteer Corps after college took him to Oregon to work with homeless families and to Houston to perform refugee resettlement work, primarily with individuals who were HIV-positive. While his undergraduate experience at Boston College inspired him to live out the principles of his faith, he felt the impact of JVC's commitment to community, spirituality, social justice, and simple lifestyle in his two years as a full-time volunteer.

Following his service with JVC, Mike earned his Masters of Divinity at Union Theological Seminary in New York, a time he pointed to as critical in helping him find his voice to share his story and beliefs.

“Learning about theological leaders such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Johann Baptist Metz, and studying under current leaders such as James Cone, Roger Haight, Mary Boys, and Janet Walton exposed me to so many possibilities I could not previously imagine,” Mike said.

Mike's path kept him in the classroom, but now as a teacher, as he taught middle and high school students for a decade in New York and in the Washington, DC, metro area. He taught philosophy, social justice, church history, and a range of other topics. Last year, he transitioned and trained to become a substance abuse counselor -- Mike is currently doing graduate work in clinical mental health counseling in addition to his work at OLQP.

For everywhere he's been, Mike said that working at OLQP has been the greatest highlight of his career, praising the priests and staff for their intelligence and love. “The Queen of Peace community has welcomed me with open arms and continues to inspire me. And the possibilities of what we can do are only defined by our imaginations.”

When asked what he believes a “successful” ministry program looks like, Mike said that its focus should be on building relationships and community as the People of God. Being in community and living interdependently means being inclusive to others, Mike said, and accepting of people for who they are without “having to check anything at the door.”

“This means peers leading peers since they are the best teachers. This means not planning event after event, but building relationship after relationship,” Mike said.



The Mothes family: Jenn, Joshua (age 8), Matty (age 5) and Mike

# The Building Forever Families Ministry

By: Frances Michalkewicz

November was a significant month for the Building Forever Families (BFF) ministry, which serves and advocates for children living without families; provides peer support and advocates for current and prospective adoptive and foster families; and educates the community about these important topics. Each November, this country observes National Adoption Month, and one Sunday that is designated Orphan Sunday. This is a time when people around the world stand together for children who are living without families of their own. Thousands of events echo across

foster care) and Fairfax County Foster and Adoption programs were present to discuss their programs and answer questions.

In addition to hosting the tables in Father Ray Hall and outside mass, BFF produced a bulletin insert providing information about the ministry and how parishioners can be involved. Notices that focused on various aspects of the adoption/foster care process were included in the weekly bulletin. Prayers of the faithful were provided for each of the Masses during the month.



BFF ministry members at a recent meeting. From back left: Emily Ward, Peter Nicewicz, Eric Hansen, Rebecca Carpenter, Ralph Johnson, Kathleen Brueger. From front left: Patricia Beltran, Emily Von Herbulis, Phyllis Charles, Debra Johnson, Frances Michalkewicz.

America and around the globe, all sharing a single goal: that God's great love for vulnerable children will find echo in our lives as well.

At OLQP, we are a people called to defend the fatherless and motherless...to care for the child who has no family. This year, many parishioners stopped at one of the BFF tables in Father Ray Hall or outside mass to learn about the millions of children who are seeking a forever family and how they might help. Representatives from *Best Kids* (a mentor organization for kids in DC

meets on the first Wednesday of each month to discuss upcoming activities. Meetings are preceded by a social gathering, and children are welcome to all events. Other social events are held throughout the year, such as the Christmas potluck that was held on December 6<sup>th</sup>.

Building Forever Families also promotes a wide array of activities throughout the year that focus on the many dimensions of adoption, foster care, and orphaned children. These include:

**Advocating for children in foster care.** Last year, more than 23,000 youths aged out of the U.S. foster care system. The BFF ministry has advocated for *Best Kids*, a great local organization that connects these young people with adults like us who can mentor them as they make their way into adulthood. The ministry has also collaborated with *Together We Rise*, which packs duffel bags for kids in foster care so they don't have to carry their few belongings in trash bags. Find out how you can help at [www.BestKids.org](http://www.BestKids.org) or [www.TogetherWeRise.org](http://www.TogetherWeRise.org).

**Educating OLQP parishioners and others who are considering becoming an adoptive or foster parent.** Interested adoptees can discover the children in our local foster care system and learn about the adoptive/foster process at [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org) or [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov). In addition, the BFF ministry offers a mentor program for prospective adoptive/foster parents – contact Debra & Ralph Johnson at [DebralphOLQP@gmail.com](mailto:DebralphOLQP@gmail.com).

**Supporting adoptive and foster families** in our parish and community by encouraging them, lending a hand, or offering a listening ear. Recognizing that their journey is often challenging and lonely, providing the support of friends and community can make a huge difference in their lives.

**Conducting a Bible Study Program** to learn about God's call to care for children who have been orphaned. A six-week study is scheduled to



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begin in January 2016, and is open to everyone. Contact Emily Ward at [emily.bolivia@gmail.com](mailto:emily.bolivia@gmail.com).

**Promoting self-education about the world of adoption, foster care and orphaned children.** You can educate yourself about the world of adoption, foster care and orphaned children by visiting the special section in the OLQP library that is dedicated to this topic. Reading, asking questions, listening, and being aware of the issues, challenges and needs of this special community of families and children is a first step to making positive change and

building awareness – in yourself and in others.

We welcome and encourage anyone who feels a call toward adoption, foster care and/or orphaned children to join the BFF ministry. We encourage all OLQP members to consider participating with the BFF ministry as we advocate for children living without families of their own, and support adoptive and foster families.

For additional information, contact Rebecca Carpenter at [rebecca.e.carpenter@gmail.com](mailto:rebecca.e.carpenter@gmail.com)

## Outreach Ministries to Temporarily Relocate



**By: Michelle Knight**

The biggest news for our outreach ministries is the temporary closing of Fr. Ray Hall. Due to the renovations, many of our ministries must move or go on hiatus. The Food Pantry will relocate operations to the Ministry Center basement, using the Peace Room and the area outside the Peace Room. The Food Pantry will take over that space from Monday morning until early afternoon on Wednesdays. The space will still be available for meetings any other day, as long as people don't mind being surrounded by food storage!

The Food Pantry will need to change some of its practices. We will not have any refrigeration during this time, so we will not be able to distribute meat and will have to restrict our bread distribution somewhat. But we will continue to offer the participants all of the items that we collect from parishioners each second weekend of the month. So continue your donations!! We may need additional volunteers, as we will need people to help bring groceries upstairs to folks who cannot manage the stairs.

Other ministries connected to the Food Pantry will change as well, including the wonderful nursery for the little ones (and often their moms and dads) while the parents wait for their turn to obtain food. The Gabriel Project will continue in a modified form. They will continue to offer mentoring. The only supplies they will be able to offer will be diapers, wipes and shampoo, depending on their supply.

Our Brown Bag lunch program will continue, but we are still working out the details on storage for supplies and for the lunches when they are made. Carpenters' Shelter will continue as usual with the gathering and organizing of the donations in the Founders' Room kitchen.

Patience and graciousness will certainly be needed by all during this time of transition. The good news is that it is only temporary and before we know it, we will be back in the freshly renovated and beautiful Fr. Ray Hall!!

## “It Takes a Party”—Gabriel Project was Cause for Celebration



**By: Paula Cruicshank**

Christmas came early for the Gabriel Project. The ministry, which provides baby items for expectant and new mothers, received a generous gift of diapers -- 2,000 total! -- baby wipes, lotion and formula in mid-December. The gifts were collected at a Christmas party held by the Vitan family.

Because of the temporary renovation of Fr. Ray Hall, the Gabriel Project has moved into a much smaller space at the Ministry Center. Regardless of the downsizing, the Gabriel Project will continue to distribute diapers, baby wipes, formula, and shampoo. The

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Vitan family – Emily, Henry, Theo and Ellie – have given the ministry a head start in baby supplies, but it will still need more donations to meet the mothers-to-be and new moms' basic necessities now and once the ministry moves back to Fr. Ray Hall.

Please consider making a donation of these needed products. And if you are planning a future party – remember the Vitan's creative idea. Ask your guests to give baby items, too. I am sure they will be just as happy to donate to the Gabriel Project.



Vitan Family (Clockwise: Emily, Henry, Theo, and Ellie)

## OLQP to Hold Event on Human Trafficking on February 8th

By: Laura Bandini

The prevalence of human trafficking knows no boundaries. It's hard to understand this incredible violation of another human being and the magnitude of the problem. Human trafficking is a \$150 billion industry. By some estimates, there are more than 20 million victims of human trafficking worldwide, 4.5 million of whom are sex slaves, and 26% of whom are children.

An estimated 100,000-300,000 children are sex trafficked in the United States.

One out of every three teens who leave home is forced into prostitution within 48 hours. According to the New York Times, around 4,000 children in the United States either leave their homes or are kicked out every day. These children are lured by traffickers and raped, beaten, and sometimes branded. When they try to escape, their traffickers often torture or gang rape them.

Last year, New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof reported on one of those victims, a ninth-grader named Emily. With Kristof's help, Emily's parents found her being advertised on a well-known website for selling prostitution and sex trafficking. She was sold through that website in four states by her armed pimp, who was also using her to try to recruit one of her friends to become a prostitute. She had been raped by half a dozen men each night and was forced to give all of the money she received to her pimp.

And there's no distance between where we live and sex trafficking. There are Emilys right here in our community who we pass on the sidewalks or in stores without having any idea that they are being raped and their human rights violated every day.



Sex trafficking happens not just to runaways, but also to children and teens who remain in the home. For instance, predators have been known to lure teenagers into the sex trade at local shopping centers and bus stops. In the midst of this misery and exploitation, Pope Francis has stirred our consciences:

"It is not possible to remain indifferent before the

knowledge that human beings are bought and sold like goods! ....

Whoever uses human persons in this way and exploits them, even if indirectly, becomes an accomplice of injustice."

You can read more about the Church's teaching on human trafficking at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/human-trafficking/>.

### Human Trafficking Discussion

On February 8, the Labor & Income Inequality Team will hold a discussion on human trafficking at 7:15pm in the Founders Room, featuring a local law enforcement officer and a sex trafficking survivor. The event is being held in conjunction with the Annual Day of Prayer and Awareness of Human Trafficking by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the International Union of Superiors General.

Although the problem of human trafficking is immense, there are practical steps we can take to combat this scourge and stand with victims. Together, we can learn to spot the Emilys around us and what actions we can take to help them get rescued. If you would like to join the Labor Team at OLQP, please contact me ([htlaura1@gmail.com](mailto:htlaura1@gmail.com)).

# The Evolution of the Computer Program in Medor's Secondary School

By: Sue Carlson, MD

For the students at Medor's secondary school, the introduction of computers has opened up a whole new world of learning. But in such a remote community, the process has not been quick or simple.

The computer program began in 2008 when a delegation from OLQP brought several used laptops to Père Leroy, then pastor of St. Joseph parish. At the time, we taught some computer basics to the teachers and sisters, e.g., how to turn a computer on and off and how to initiate a Word document.

In 2012 we got in touch with Denny Baumann, a computer expert in Warrenton, VA. Denny and his colleagues collect used computers, clean the hard drives, load them with educational software in French and donate them to schools in Haiti. That year Denny gave us a number of laptops for Medor's secondary school.

But there was a catch: the school had no electricity. The computers were charged each evening in the rectory from Père Luckson's generator and brought to the school for use during the day. Operating the computers on batteries did not work well. They quickly "ran out of juice" and could not be used properly by the students.

In a place where there is no electrical grid, renewable solar energy is a great option for electrical needs. By 2014, we had raised funds to install a solar system for the secondary school. Père Luckson, the current pastor of St. Joseph parish, found a highly rated Haitian solar energy company willing to climb the mountain to Medor to install the system and train the key people on its use and upkeep.

The heavy solar panels and batteries had to be hand carried up the mountain. It took 4 people to carry each panel. And the transport was done at night (in the dark!!) to avoid the heat of the day. Although it was a struggle to get the equipment up to Medor, Père Luckson had plenty of volunteers to do the job. They were motivated by the

importance of the project and were pleased that he provided them a small amount of cash and a meal when they successfully arrived in Medor with the equipment.

Solar power allowed the computer program for the secondary school to begin in earnest. Père Luckson hired a computer teacher and requested that we send more laptops for the school's newly dedicated computer lab. Denny Baumann provided 26 more laptops, which were delivered by an OLQP delegation. These, along with the computers already present in Medor, are enough to provide each secondary school student with 1 hour of computer instruction every other week.



Medor teachers receive their initial introduction to computers



Students in Medor's secondary school learn how to use a computer

But the computer lab still had no Internet access. Denny again came to the rescue. He produced a device he calls "Haiti Internet in a Box" (HIIAB). He loaded it with all of Wikipedia in Creole, French and English, all of the Khan Academy lectures in French, and many books in Creole, French and English. And he donated a HIIAB to Medor's secondary school computer lab.

The device was delivered to Mario Calixte, a Haitian computer expert in Port-au-Prince. In November 2015, Mario climbed the mountain to bring the HIIAB to Medor. He installed the device in the

computer lab and trained the computer instructor and several other teachers in its use. In a place with few books, this device can be transformative. Père Luckson describes the HIIAB as "a veritable gold mine of training, information and general culture".

Thanks to the efforts of many people, there has been a sure and steady introduction of technology in a place where it was previously nonexistent. Many of Medor's students have excelled even without the benefit of



Pere Luckson shows off the solar panels that provide energy for Medor's computer lab

computers and with few books. Now, with HIIAB, it seems the sky is the limit.

We are grateful to all involved: for the wonderful support of OLQP parishioners, the twinning relationship between our parish and St. Joseph in Medor, the dedication of Denny Baumann and Mario Calixte, the leadership of Père Luckson, and the work of many Medor community members.

## The New Challenge of Peace: The Relevance of *Pacem in Terris* for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Prepared remarks by Marie Dennis, Co-President of Pax Christi International, who was a speaker at OLQP's Father Kelly series of talks on peace, Fall 2013.

The context for Pope John XXIII's great work, *Pacem in Terris*, written in 1963, was profoundly different from our context 50 years later. The geopolitical reality and even the global economy (at least those dimensions of both that were visible in the US and European media) were then largely bi-polar – shaped by the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. People living behind the Iron Curtain could hardly imagine an end to the status quo. At the same time, seeds of liberation were germinating in Africa; the civil rights movement was strong and effective in the United States; and other signs of change were on the horizon.

When I returned to *Pacem in Terris* in preparation for this fiftieth anniversary I was struck by several characteristics of the document that I had not remembered: its scope and its optimism. In addition, Pope John XXIII underscored two specific points that remain particularly pertinent today: the need for an effective

international body to ensure the universal common good and the need to end the arms race. Permit me to say a few words about each of these.

The first is its scope – the sweeping content of *Pacem in Terris* says remarkably little directly about war, concentrating instead on describing the kind of political, social, economic and cultural conditions that generate peace/shalom on earth – right relationships based on justice, respect, love and solidarity - from the interpersonal to the national to the global.

The “rights and duties” the document holds up as “universal and inviolable and therefore altogether inalienable” are incredibly far-reaching. Many of them, including the most basic, are in need of urgent attention in these times. A few examples:

- the right to live, to the means necessary for the

proper development of life (food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, necessary social services, the right to be looked after in the event of ill health, disability, old age, unemployment)

- the right to seek truth, to be accurately informed about public events, to receive a good education
- the right to work, to decent conditions for work, to a wage “determined in accordance to the precepts of justice”
- the right to emigrate and immigrate
- the social obligation that qualifies the right to own private property

*Pacem in Terris* also emphasizes the right role of government - based upon the principle of subsidiarity. Its challenge is enormous to a contemporary global economy increasingly shaped to benefit a few very wealthy and powerful people, while leaving millions in dire poverty, workers and migrants vulnerable, and the earth at great risk.



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The second characteristic of *Pacem in Terris* that caught my attention was its optimism. For example, paragraph 40 talks about the “*progressive improvement in the economic and social condition*” of workers; paragraph 42 says “*soon no nation will rule over another and none will be subject to an alien power*”; paragraph 43 – “*nor is any nation nowadays content to submit to foreign domination*” and “*The longstanding inferiority complex of certain classes because of their economic and social status, sex, or position in the State, and the corresponding superiority complex of other classes, is rapidly becoming a thing of the past.*”

That kind of optimism was amazing – and points to the inherent optimism of our Christian tradition. And Pope John XXIII had not seen the amazing nonviolent revolutions that would eventually take down the Berlin Wall and reshape the global political reality.

At the same time, I’m afraid I am not convinced that the reality is so much better now: Though world wars are less frequent and statisticians claim there are fewer wars, I look at Iraq, Afghanistan, DR Congo, Sudan/South Sudan, Syria, Israel-Palestine – not to mention resource wars - with a heavy heart.

The arms race remains extremely dangerous (drones, killer robots, slowed efforts toward nuclear disarmament, small arms the weapons of mass destruction etc.). While globalization has a positive side, it has been enormously destructive to many communities – especially its unregulated financial side. Earth may well be irreversibly damaged.

Pope John XXIII also insisted on the inadequacy of the modern state to

ensure the universal common good: “*Today the universal common good presents us with problems which are world-wide in their dimensions; problems, therefore, which cannot be solved except by a public authority with power, organization and means co-extensive with these problems, and with a world-wide sphere of activity. Consequently the moral order itself demands the establishment of some such general form of public authority...But this general authority equipped with world-wide power and adequate means for achieving the universal common good cannot be imposed by force. It must be set up with the consent of all nations. If its work is to be effective, it must operate with fairness, absolute impartiality, and with dedication to the common good of all peoples.*” (Paragraphs 137,138)

The role of the United States in relation to this is particularly egregious, having refused for years to support the United Nations financially or politically and attempting to manipulate opinion within the UN to serve US interests. For too many years, the US held a position of extreme unilateralism. Although that has shifted significantly now, the damage done by abrogating the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty, undermining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, blocking negotiations to improve international mechanisms to prevent the production of biological and chemical weapons, repudiating the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, renouncing the US signature on the treaty to create an International Criminal Court is very slow to repair. Furthermore, targeted assassinations using drones, the continued existence

of the US prison at Guantanamo Bay, recent revelations about US spying on other nations’ leaders etc. don’t help us build the kind of relationships necessary for trusted multilateral cooperation. At the same time, the strong role that the UN has played in response to the use of chemical weapons in Syria is encouraging.

Finally, *Pacem in Terris* speaks directly to the arms race. Forty years later, the need for disarmament is just as urgent. While there are fewer nuclear weapons ready to launch, the possibility of nuclear terrorism is very real; more countries possess nuclear weapons than did 50 years ago and not all are signatories to the NPT; deterrence has become a permanent state of affairs, etc. And, we are entering into an era of new lethal technologies (drone warfare) that is shifting the very concept of a battlefield with limits and undermining international law. We still live in a world that is wracked by violence, though of a different nature. For too many people and nations, a major component of the fabric of life is war - preparing for war, struggling to survive in the context of war, and dealing with its consequences.

The human and environmental cost is enormous: millions of refugees roam the earth (look at Syria), despite the landmines and cluster bombs treaties, a sea of these weapons make many communities uninhabitable; psychological trauma resulting from war destroys families and communities; the environmental impact of war is tremendous; and the economic cost is a huge burden on the backs of the poor.

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In the past 50 years Catholic thinking about war and peace has evolved in significant ways, increasingly emphasizing nonviolence. We believe that the recent, powerful statements and global witness of Pope Francis are urging us to build on this movement, to develop and articulate an ethic and a theology of nonviolence and sustainable peace. And the Syrian crisis is teaching us that practical, effective nonviolent strategies and instruments must be developed as alternatives to military action if the international community is going to take seriously our responsibility to protect in situations of horrific violence.

To embrace nonviolence as a global ethic will require a very long term commitment, a rebuilding of the foundation on which international relationships are built. Rather than defining security in terms of higher walls and stronger fighting forces – rather than orchestrating fear - we will have to develop the concept of security in terms of community, access to food, water, decent jobs, education, health care, re-creation ...for all people everywhere, as Pope John XXIII so eloquently did in *Pacem in Terris*.

We will have to embrace this concept of human security -- or better yet, human and earth security – rather than national security; invest our resources in and learn to use tools to transform or resolve conflict; support peace education; commit ourselves to inter-religious and cross-cultural cooperation; find ways to take the profit out of war and production for war; and forego the use of military action to defend economic interests or access natural resources. Pax Christi is advocating for the integration of peace building and violence prevention as core elements in the post Millennium Development Goals framework.

I believe that our role as followers of Christ – as Catholic Christians - is to insist on the development of nonviolent strategies and the international institutions capable of managing them as practical alternatives to violent force in life-threatening situations. We will have to strengthen the prophetic imagination necessary to make nonviolence real. The fact that we have failed to do the work necessary to prepare a nonviolent ethic that can be consistently applied at a societal as well as an interpersonal level in different situations, is no excuse for dismissing the possibility that one exists. In fact, we have seen ample demonstrations to the contrary, including very recently in Syria.

Nonviolence is not non-response. We have simply excused ourselves from the moral and ethical imperative of finding

a nonviolent way to respond to tyranny and humanitarian emergencies. And so we have not.

We also believe it is time for Catholic moral theologians and people of faith to stop referring to the ethical criteria designed to limit war as the “just war theory.” The expression itself, “just war theory,” seems to suggest that war can be readily justified, rather than that war is virtually indefensible in our times.

Clearly, on this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Pacem in Terris* (and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US bishops’ 1983 pastoral letter on peace), there is a “New Challenge of Peace” confronting the human community. It keeps these rich and powerful documents as relevant as they were decades ago.

## Arlington Diocese Celebrates Black Catholic History Month 2015

By: Veronica Dabney

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Unity Mass was held during Black Catholic History month on November 21, 2015, at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in Vienna, Virginia. Bishop Joseph N. Perry, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, Illinois was the celebrant. This year the mass was preceded by a Day of Reflection--a full day of lectures and workshops focused on religious vocations in the black community. The formal theme was “Watering the Garden: Growing Vocations in the Black Catholic Family.”



Most Reverend Joseph N. Perry, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, Keynote Speaker, Celebrant and Homilist

## Black Catholic History , Continued from Page 10

An outstanding lineup of lecturers offered presentations, which included: "The Cause for Canonization for Fr. Augustus Tolton," presented by keynote speaker, celebrant and homilist, the Most Reverend Joseph N. Perry of Chicago; "Vocations to the Priesthood," presented by Father Scott Woods from the Archdiocese of Washington; and "Give me Jesus: Introducing Quiet Prayer with Scripture." presented by OLQP's Cecilia Braveboy, coordinator of the Minkisi ministry.



Deacon Al Anderson of St. Joseph's in Alexandria, welcomes participants to the Day of Reflection/ Unity Mass, November 21, 2015

The Day of Reflection/ Unity Mass events have been jointly sponsored over the years by the Arlington and Richmond Dioceses. The Arlington Diocese' Office of Black Catholic Ministries (OBCM) and the Diocesan Office of Multicultural Ministries plan and coordinate the annual event. The two offices bring together the African, African American, Caribbean and other communities in the diaspora in a common spiritual and cultural experience that can be shared with the entire Arlington Catholic congregation.

For more information about OBCM, contact Deacon Al Anderson at: [alandersonjr@verizon.net](mailto:alandersonjr@verizon.net)

For more information about the Diocesan Office of Multicultural Ministries, contact Corinne Monogue at: [multicultural@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:multicultural@arlingtondiocese.org)

## Minkisi Sponsors 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Mini Retreat

By: Veronica Dabney

OLQP's Minkisi Ministry held its 18<sup>th</sup> annual mini-retreat on November 14, 2015. The retreat began with a mass celebrated by Fr. Freddy Washington Pastor at St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Harlem, New York. Fr. Freddy is a gifted speaker and homilist who has been a frequent guest at OLQP, and has officiated at several of the Minkisi retreats.



Fr. Freddy Washington, Pastor, St. Mark the Evangelist Church, Harlem, N.Y., Celebrant and Retreat Facilitator  
Photo by Phyllis L. Johnson

The theme of this year's retreat was "Lord Make Us Channels of Your Peace." After the spirit-filled mass and an inspirational homily, the remainder of the retreat-- a lecture, reflections and prayers, was held in the Ministry Center Founders Room. Fr. Freddy's message of forgiveness, reconciliation, love, mercy, remembrance and healing left the recipients of his message with a renewed understanding of how to find peace in a chaotic world.

The Minkisi ministry's main focus is on faith formation through scripture reading, contemplative prayer and individual and group reflection. The group meets regularly on the first Monday of each month. For more information about the Minkisi Ministry, contact Coordinator Cecilia Braveboy at: [jisaac3@verizon.net](mailto:jisaac3@verizon.net)

The National Black Catholic Congress Newsletter published a more comprehensive article about the retreat, written by Cecilia Braveboy, in its January 2016 edition. That article can be found at: <http://nbccongress.org/black-catholic-news/2016/channels-of-peace.asp>