

The ADVOCATE

Queen of Peace Quarterly Newsletter

SUMMER 2017



In this issue...

- 1... One America Movement
- 2... Fr. David Ray
- 3... Islamic Center
- 5... Doorways
- 6... Health Care Rally
- 6... Twinning
- 9... Agroforestry
- 9... Labor Day
- 10... Microaggressions
- 11... Michelle Knight
- 12... Katie Remedios

Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church

2700 19th Street South
Arlington VA 22204
Phone: 703-979-5580
Fax: 703-979-5590
www.olqpva.org

Editor's Note: *Who is "the other?" The Mission Statement of OLQP is "dedicated to witnessing the teachings of Jesus Christ, especially the Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 25: 31-46." In the OLQP community, Verse 35 particularly resonates: "I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me." This issue of The Advocate explores the many "others" in our midst: the homeless; those from other faith traditions, cultures and lands; and those who are people of color. There are millions in this world who lack the basic necessities of life—food, shelter, clean water and clean air. Yet we don't need to travel the world to find the poor and the stranger. They are at our door. How will we welcome them in our midst? How will we see Christ in our sister and brother?*

—Paula Cruickshank, Editor, The Advocate

One America Movement

Bridging Religious, Racial, Political and Cultural Divides

By Sally Harrs

Millions of Americans feel disenfranchised after the 2016 presidential election. They are bombarded by angry tirades from the media, politicians, and social media that remind them that they are being threatened, ignored, or disrespected in this extraordinary time.

The shared values that have made America strong are under fire, and friends and family members are divided and angry. But faith leaders from major religious denominations are now speaking out and joining together to build a movement that unites Americans around a vision of strong communities, respect for the dignity of individuals, our shared search for fairness, and our shared desire to be respected by others.

The One America Movement (One America) was founded by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith leaders from across the country following the 2016 presidential election. One America's goal is to bring people together across religious, racial, cultural and political divides to serve together in their communities through service projects, shared meals, and conversations that counter divisiveness, rebuild our country, and repair our world.

One America Movement strives to heal growing divisions in American society and build human relationships to cut through the bubbles that people harbor that increasingly define our country. At the heart of One America is the challenge of removing these bubbles that people hold onto that isolate them and shut out the shared values, ideas, and priorities of others, including friends, colleagues, and family members.

The faith and community leaders who guide One America believe that the start to destroying the bubbles we all protect is to unite together side-by-side to meet urgent needs in our communities—by talking with each other, listening to each other, and getting to know and respect

One America, continued on page 2

One America, continued from page 1

each other. Authentic relationships offer a path to strong communities, respect for the dignity of individuals, and shared search for fairness and respect by and for others.

David Brooks in a recent *New York Times* article wrote of the urgency for Americans to organize frequent encounters with people in different bubbles in order “to respect and understand the fellow Americans who reside across the social chasm.”

One America at its recent launch party introduced a strategy of reaching out to parishes and other religious organizations across the country to affiliate and to initiate community projects.

The evening was enhanced by a meal prepared by Syrian families who have recently settled in the US. Participants shared a meal with others interested in becoming active in One America through service, the donation of time and money, and simply signing up and joining the movement.

Charles Blow, a columnist in *The New York Times*, recalled the highest standards to which most Americans aspire and which are fundamental to One America’s vision:

“You may have been on the losing side of this year’s election, but you are on the right side of history. In the final tally, courage will always defeat fear; love will always conquer hate; the beautiful diversity of America, and indeed of all of humanity, will always outshine the darkness of racial enmity.”

For more information, the organization’s website is:
www.werepair.org/oneamerica ♦

Fr. David Ray, C.S.Sp.

Guardian of the Homeless

By Jack Sullivan

From the perspective of 2017 it is difficult to recall how slowly the notion of homelessness in Northern Virginia, including Arlington County, took hold in the public mind. Father David Ray, C.S.Sp., the longtime Spiritan pastor of OLQP (1958 to his death in 1983), saw the problem early on and took steps that put him sometimes at odds with officialdom in the County.

Once regarded as a big city problem, homelessness in Arlington became a crisis early in the 1980s after the de-institutionalization of patients from state mental hospitals left many of them on the streets. The numbers of homeless grew in the 1980s as the Reagan Administration cut funding for housing and social services.



Fr. David Ray, C.S.Sp.

When local officials were slow to pick up on the needs, churches stepped into the breach, opening spaces in basements and other places during winter months. Central to Fr. Ray’s faith was Mt. 25:35, “I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink; a stranger and you welcomed me.” Under his leadership OLQP went a step further and opened the basement of the former rectory to as many as ten homeless men all year round. Fr. Ray also provided residents with food.

Conditions for the men, however, were rudimentary: Toilet facilities were in the church restroom and what is now Father Ray Hall. There were no showers.

“Fr. Ray did not believe that the occupants should get too comfortable,” says Dan Morrissey, a longtime OLQP parishioner. “But he did not close the shelter when the weather warmed.” The facility brought Fr. Ray in conflict with Arlington officials charged with enforcing zoning and health laws. But as the pastor often joked, at the same time other county officials were sending men to OLQP to be housed and fed.

I remember one incident at a Sunday Mass when I was ushering. Fr. Ray had just stepped onto the altar and had his back to the congregation when a large young homeless man got up from a front seat, mounted the altar, and seemed to be menacing the

Fr. Ray, continued on page 3

Fr. Ray, continued from page 2

priest. Fr. Ray turned around and said: "Leroy, go back and sit down." The man did as told and was quiet through the service. An Army chaplain in World War II, the pastor could command obedience.

When Fr. Ray died in October 1983, Alberta Thurmond, his assistant, provided continuity for the shelter, working with the new pastor, Father James Healy, C.S.Sp. Fr. Healy improved the facilities, installing bathroom facilities and a shower in the basement. The OLQP shelter continued into the 1980s. According to longtime members of the church, the parish shelter was never licensed.

In ensuing years, Arlington County assumed greater responsibility for housing the homeless and was able to provide facilities and assistance beyond the ability of the local churches. Our parish shelter was phased out. Fr. Healy heavily lobbied the County Government, along with others, to open a shelter and it finally did so many years later. ♦

Outreach Efforts of Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center

By Kathy Desmond

Fazia Deen is the energetic Interfaith and Outreach Liaison of the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center in Falls Church. On April 23, The Islamic Center held an Open House where an estimated 700 people attended, including members of OLQP.

Guests enjoyed traditional food and drink, fashion and crafts made by Muslims from Ethiopia to Bangladesh. The Open House included a guided tour of the prayer rooms for men and women, classrooms, and kitchen in the main building. Posters and flyers advertised activities from English and Arabic classes, the Food Bank (which serves an average 1,200 families on Thursday mornings) and Thrift Shop, computer classes and youth sports to the history of Islam in America.

Entrepreneur flyers included homeownership financing under Sharia, Islamic canonical law, and a charter trip for the hajj, pilgrimage to Mecca. Posters highlighted Ramadan's iftar, breaking fast after sunset. The Center serves 1,200 iftar meals each night for the month of Ramadan. Founded in 1983, Dar Al-Hijrah aims to reach the 40,000 Muslims who reside in the area it serves. Each Friday, 3,000 to 4,000 Muslims come to the mosque for worship services.

Dar Al-Hijrah means "Home of Immigration." Its membership is very diverse: about half are Arab and half non-Arab, and members speak 39 languages. The Outreach staff of two is also responsible for in-reach to the Muslim community as well as outreach to the wider community.

As part of its outreach program, the Islamic Center hosts listening sessions. Like OLQP, Dar Al-Hijrah is a member

of VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement). The Center uses translators for the listening sessions for VOICE.

These listening sessions identified the main concerns of the Muslim community: immigration issues and bullying in the schools. Fear is widespread in the community due to increased Islamophobia, expressed in harmful words and actions. Fazia is an immigration lawyer. People come seeking legal advice, for help with documents, for example, for Temporary Protected Status.

The Center's Government Affairs Department works with and makes referrals to other organizations, such as the Council on American Islamic Relations and Hogar Immigrant Services of Catholic Charities. The Center's response to bullying included a video production about student rights and reporting bullying using a phone app to document incidents of Islamophobia. They also met many government officials to increase safety of Muslims.

The Islamic Center's mission is "to serve the Creator by engaging, developing, and empowering our diverse Muslim community for the betterment of our society." Its slogan is "Working Together for a Stronger Community" and its programs focus on "building bridges with a wider spectrum of interfaith and civic partners." (2016 Dar Al-Hijrah Annual Report.) It aims to "ensure women's inclusion by holistically including

Dar Al-Hijrah, continued on page 4

Dar Al-Hijrah, continued from page 3

women in planning, execution and evaluation” of all programs. They also have religion classes, a Green Team, a food bank, and thrift shop.

The Center’s services aim to reach community members in Northern Virginia and consist of the following:

- Social Services assist families with economic and social challenges, refer families to services provided by Fairfax County, and help families become more self-sufficient. Each month, over 1,000 families receive assistance.
- The Youth department’s activities for younger children include soccer and Girl Scouts and for older youth include Open Mic Night and a Youth Conference.
- The Communications department helps the Center’s voice reach many, with a new focus on twitter and instagram.
- Education programs not only help the Muslim community to comprehend Islam as a way of life, but also promote life skills, such as a workshop to help wives create happy families.
- Weekend schools help approximately 400 students learn Arabic, Islamic principles, and memorize the Qu’ran.
- Outreach programs aim to increase civic engagement and interfaith participation. Members are involved in “Get out the Vote” activities and participate in interfaith activities, especially those organized by VOICE.

The 130 unique programs each year would not be possible without volunteers. For example, the Taste of Islam committee worked for five months, mobilizing about 90 volunteers, to put on this year’s open house.

The Outreach program collaborates with Social Services to help the needy. Once a month, volunteers bring a hot lunch for 150 homeless people prepared in the Center’s kitchen to the Safe Haven drop in center of First Christian church across the street. The

Center opens its doors as a hypothermia shelter for about 35 homeless men and women (on different nights), Monday through Thursday.

Justice for Juniors is one of Fazia’s favorite initiatives. She drives volunteers from Dar Al-Hijrah once a week to the DC Juvenile Center to mentor the young people in detention and help them develop moral problem solving skills. She trains the 21 volunteers, mostly college students.

The Family Care Committee visits the sick, especially Muslims, in the Northern Virginia Hospital Center, INOVA, Capital Hospice and Howard University hospital.

What can we do? There are many ways that OLQP members can collaborate with the Dar Al-Hijrah’s outreach program. We can participate in VOICE actions together. We can accept their invitations to visit. In addition to the Taste of Islam Open House, consider these opportunities:

- Ramadan Interfaith Iftar Programs. During Ramadan, members of the Center invite friends of other faiths to come for the nightly breaking of the bread, usually on a Wednesday or Thursday. The program begins with a short film in the library about fasting, followed by discussion, a short tour of the masjid (mosque) and a wonderful meal. Sometimes other groups host an iftar.
- The Cup of Tea movement began in Norway to counter the growing distrust and distance between native Norwegians and the immigrant Muslim community. Every month members of Dar Al-Hijrah and people from other faith traditions come together at the Center for a cup of tea. Seated at tables for 8, they talk to get to know one another.
- Masjid Tours. Tours are available on Sunday and on request and last no more than 1.5 hours. Contact outreach@daralhijrah.net.

Visit the website www.Hijrah.org for more information about the Center’s programs and services, for Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and calendar of events.

Dar Al-Hijrah, continued on page 5

Dar Al-Hijrah, continued from page 4

Fazia says, "God's work is 24/7." Her work takes "lots of faith and energy." Her faith shines through. So does her energy. But she also hopes for an administrative assistant.

"Imam Johari Abdul-Malik, the director of the Outreach Program described in this article, is much appreciated by VOICE members. As described in the *Washington Post* articles of June 6 and June 10, he resigned over a statement by the senior imam supporting the abhorrent cultural practice of female genital mutilation. The Board of the Islamic Center condemned the elder imam's statement, stating it was against both U.S. law and Islamic law, and the imam apologized, but the Board stopped short of firing the senior imam. The Center Board and Fazia Deen are committed to continuing the Center's outreach program and active involvement in VOICE. " ♦

Feeding Victims of Domestic Violence

By Jack Sullivan

From Abraham in the Old Testament to Martha and Mary in the New, "welcoming the stranger" has involved food. "Of course," asserts Peg Butner, "food is a very important aspect of life."

She should know. For the past thirteen years, Peg, an OLQP parishioner, has been coordinating

the weekly food purchases for the displaced women and children at the Domestic Violence Safehouse run by an organization called Doorways for Women and Families.

The volunteer work has sent Peg scouring the shelves of area supermarkets for groceries that include staple items as well as cuisine that spans the globe, ranging from Japanese udon noodles and Mexican "pan dulces," to goat meat, which is most popular in some parts of Asia, particularly India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

"Every Thursday the Safehouse coordinator provides us with a list of groceries they need for the coming week," Peg explained. "Then four of us take turns shopping for them. Often my shopping cart will hold as many as seven gallons of milk and four of juice," she said.

The Doorways organization runs two emergency houses that offer temporary residence to Arlington families under duress. The Safehouse where Peg volunteers is an eleven-bed facility that provides a temporary haven to women and children threatened with domestic violence. The shelter accommodates several families at a time for short stays, annually totaling 60 to 80 women and children. While in the Safehouse, the mothers receive career counseling, help in finding permanent housing and other services.

The residents do their own cooking in the kitchen. Food for the

residents is obtained in various ways. A farmer regularly drops off produce. Most of the food items, however, are purchased with supermarket gift cards purchased with money donated by supporters, among them the Butners. Community organizations have fundraisers to provide household supplies and toiletry necessities, including diapers.

Peg, who also serves at the Matt. 25 clothing store and, with her husband, ushers at the 5:30 p.m. Saturday Mass, answered a notice in the Arlington Sun Gazette in 2004 for someone to assist with buying the groceries. "I did the shopping by myself for a month and knew I needed help," she recalled.

Since then Peg has been assisted by at least three others who take turns going to the store and deliver their goods to the shelter. Meanwhile, Peg does the scheduling.

"The clients at Doorways come from a wide range of racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds and like to cook traditional dishes that sometimes require special cuts of meat or unusual ingredients," she noted. "To the extent possible we try to accommodate those tastes since they make people feel comfortable."

That is what sent her on the quests noted earlier. Peg eventually found the udon noodles and "pan dulces," and she now knows better than to shop at Safeway for goat.

♦

Health Care Advocates Aim to Make a Difference

By Kathy Desmond

(Editorial Note: Advocate staff member, Kathy Desmond, attended an early morning health care rally on June 29, 2017. Her experience is shared below.)



Sen. Timothy Kaine speaks at health care rally, L-R: Dr. Sue Carlson, Sen. Kaine, Kathy Desmond

The morning was beautiful. Sen. Tim Kaine came before 6 a.m. (in jeans and a sports shirt) and stayed for more than an hour. He

spoke about how much difference we (faith-based advocates) were making. Kaine said that the core of all (House and Senate Majority) bills was tax reform, not health care reform—giving the rich a big tax break and paying for it by taking away health coverage for the poor.

Afterwards, informally, the Senator told us how he was on a key committee and would work together with moderate Republicans to make some needed fixes to improve The Affordable Care Act (ACA) if the current bill failed.

Sue Carlson, an eye physician (and member of OLQP who heads the Haiti delegation to Medor) came in her surgical scrubs and explained why she was at the morning event. She said it wasn't until ACA that she began to see many patients

who were long overdue for cataract surgery.

And why did they come now? Because, Dr. Carlson explained, these patients finally had health insurance. ♦



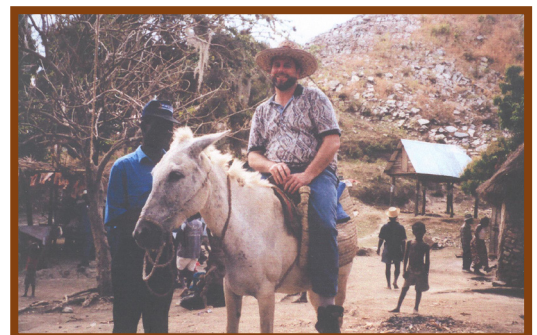
Other OLQP members attending the rally and Mass: Meade Hannah, who played music at the service; Anne Murphy; Jen McHenry; and one of the event organizers, Network's Laura Peralta-Schulte.

Twenty Years of Twinning

Our Lady Queen of Peace and St. Joseph Parish in Medor, Haiti

By Sue Carlson, M.D.

The year was 1997. Father Jeff Duaime, C.S.Sp., was pastor at OLQP. Having worked in Haiti, he was aware of the many hardships that Haitians endure. True to the Spiritan charism, which includes serving those most in need, Fr. Jeff asked parishioners to form a Haiti Committee. He and the committee then enrolled OLQP in the Parish Twinning Program, which pairs U.S. parishes with parishes in Haiti and elsewhere. They requested a Haitian parish with the most challenges, one that other U.S. parishes might find too difficult to partner with for the long haul. They had faith that OLQP would be able to climb the mountain to St. Joseph's in Medor (both literally and figuratively!), one of the most inaccessible parishes in the



Fr. Jeff Duaime, C.S.Sp. goes to Medor

Twinning, continued on page 7

Twinning, continued from page 6

twinning program, a place without roads, running water, sewage system, or electrical grid.

Now, 20 years later, a celebration is being planned in Medor, to recognize the many accomplishments of our partnership. Père Luckson, the current pastor of St. Joseph's, has invited a delegation from OLQP to attend, along with both Fr. Jeff and Père Daniel, the pastor of St. Joseph's when the twinning began. The festivities will include a dedication ceremony at a newly established tree nursery, a special visitation with the children in each classroom, and a celebratory Mass.

Fr. Jeff and Père Daniel have both said that our twinning relationship has provided fruits beyond their wildest imaginations. Here are some of the partners' accomplishments:

- In 1997, St. Joseph's had only a primary school, with just 320 students. No one went beyond the 6th grade. Today, the parish educates 3,000 students in grades K-13, in Medor's primary and secondary schools, as well as primary schools in three outlying chapel areas. Dozens of Medor's graduates now attend university, just a pipe dream 20 years ago.
- Our twinning relationship made it possible to build Medor's first secondary school, as well as a new primary school to replace the buildings destroyed in Haiti's 2010 earthquake.
- The secondary school has a solar-powered computer lab, and all secondary school students receive regular computer instruction. Students and teachers do computer-based research using "Haiti Internet in a Box," a device containing educational material in Creole, French, Spanish and English, ideal for places like Medor without Internet connection.



Some of the children receiving an education in Medor's primary school



Secondary school children receive computer training at the solar powered computer lab

- The original church in Medor was small and could not accommodate the many people attending Sunday Mass. We were able to help fund the building of a new church. It was dedicated in 2007 and has a capacity of 2,500. When aftershocks from the 2010 earthquake damaged the church's foundation, we applied for and received grant funding for needed repairs.
- A number of programs have improved health in the area, and some have saved lives. All school children receive a school lunch, improving their nutritional status. Families are encouraged to participate in the Klorfasil water purification program, to decrease water-borne illness. The importance of using a latrine is stressed, and around 180 families now have household latrines called arbor-loos. Classes have been conducted on cholera prevention and treatment. Medor now partners with Haiti Air Ambulance, a helicopter service which transports seriously ill patients to a hospital.

Twinning, continued on page 8



Family Arbor-loo

- OLQP health care specialists have conducted five medical missions and nine eyeglass missions in Medor, and contributed to the pharmacies of two medical clinics run by nursing Sisters. The clinics now have a “Medical Internet in a Box,” a device loaded with medical information and videos in Creole and other languages, important because there are few medical books and no internet connection there.

- The agro-forestry program in St. Joseph parish has planted 636,000 trees since 2010, while teaching improved farming techniques and the care of the trees and crops. Participating farmers receive a tool to use in the tree nurseries and in their personal garden plots. There are sustainable bean seed and animal sharing co-ops. Farmers attest that the agro-forestry program has improved their livelihoods, and other communities in St. Joseph parish have requested that the program be expanded so they, too, can reap the many benefits.

- The solar energy program provides power for the rectory, church, convent, and parish clinic, as well as the computer lab. Soon the program will be expanded to include the student dormitory. The

students in the dorm are looking forward to having electricity; they want to be able to study at night!

A new initiative is currently underway in Medor, which is now part of the “3Legs” pilot project conceived by Spiritan priest, Father Joseph Philippe, C.S.Sp. The goal of the program is to sustainably increase wealth in rural communities through:

Leg 1: local grassroots organization;

Leg 2: human resource development (having 3 secondary school graduates attend university to study agronomy, veterinary medicine and business, with the promise to return home after graduation); and

Leg 3: local business formation, using seed money given by the program.

Medor has formed a local development committee that meets regularly (Leg 1) and has four students studying the required subjects at the University of Fondwa (Leg 2). The people of Medor have expressed enthusiasm for the 3Legs program, which they see as way for them to raise up their community.

The successes in our twinning relationship rest on prayerful solidarity as the parishes work together to improve Medor’s standard of living. In all of our joint efforts, we strive for sustainability. St. Joseph parish requests each shared program. Haitians do the actual work, from engineers who design earthquake-resistant buildings, to children who carry stones on their heads to the construction sites. Medor families contribute the funds they can afford.

Over our twenty years of partnership, both OLQP and St. Joseph parish have been nurtured as the two parishes love, pray for and serve each other. ♦



Sunday Mass in Medor: The altar cloth was embroidered by one of the women in St. Joseph parish; fruits and vegetables were presented during the Offertory Procession.

Sucess Stories From Medor's Agroforestry Program

By Sue Carlson, M.D.

Francois Pierre lives in the community of Dodart. He is 45 years old and the father of four children.

Mr. Pierre joined the Agroforestry program in 2013 during a meeting hosted by Smallholder Farmers Alliance (SFA) in Medor. By actively participating in the training program, he became very knowledgeable about environmental protection as well as agroforestry technologies. His tree plantation site, which SFA helped him build, is currently one of the best in the area.

In the first planting season of 2016, Mr. Pierre received 24 pounds of black beans, which SFA planted

with him. He harvested 192 pounds. After returning the initial amount to the SFA seed bank, he sold some of the beans, kept some for family consumption, and built his own personal seed bank. The money he earned from the sale of his beans helped him rehabilitate



Mr. Pierre working in the tree nursery at the chapel area of Dodar

his house, which was very old and vulnerable to hurricanes. During the second planting season of 2016, he used seeds from his own seed bank, and did not require any support from SFA.

In early 2016, Mr. Pierre received one goat from SFA. By the end of the year, he was able to pass along a goat as a gift to another farmer and keep the initial goat (the mother). An SFA technician says that a healthy male goat can be sold for at least US\$120.

Mr. Pierre's situation has changed dramatically since he has been in the program. He is economically more self-sufficient, more environmentally friendly, and knowledgeable about better agricultural practices. SFA's dream is to transform the practices of many other farmers as it has with Mr. Pierre. ♦

Come to the Second Annual Labor Day Mass

By Laura Bandini

Please help spread the word about the very special Second Annual OLQP Labor Day Mass on Labor Day, September 4, at 11 am. It will be a bilingual Mass and all are welcome. In our humble way, the parish Labor & Income Inequality Team began the annual Labor Day Mass last year sharing in the life mission and legacy of giants like Msgr. George Higgins and deeply rooted in our Catholic Church's support of unions and labor justice from its nineteenth century founding encyclical on Catholic Social Teaching, *Rerum Novarum*, continuing to present day.

St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City hosts a bustling annual Labor Day Mass. Last year, it was celebrated by Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, with Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, greeting the 1,200 labor leaders and union members in attendance. Immediately after Mass, the congregants flooded the streets of Manhattan for the annual Labor Day parade.

Across the Potomac, the

Archdiocese of Washington D.C. held for more than 50 years, until recently, an annual Labor Day Mass, often presided over by legendary Labor Priest Monsignor George Higgins until his death in 2002. Monsignor Higgins, who authored the USCCB's Labor Day Statement for decades and stood with workers on their picket lines and in their union halls throughout his priestly life, saw his work with labor as a "ministry of presence."

More than anyone else, Monsignor Higgins effectively brought the Catholic Church to the workers. Former AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said of him, "We respect him for his strength, we revere him for his conscience, we stand in

Labor Day, continued on page 10

Labor Day, continued from page 9

awe of his intellect and we thank him for his love.” And Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza stated “If there is a more respected priest in this country than George Higgins, I have not heard of him. ... Monsignor Higgins has no peers in this country today who can match his contribution to the Catholic Church’s involvement in social justice for workers.” His love for workers and the Church led him to write in 1999 that to not seize the opportunity to have a special Labor Day Mass would be a “pastoral failure.”

Our little parish can never hold a massive Labor Day Mass like the one in St. Patrick’s Cathedral, nor can anyone fill the shoes of Monsignor Higgins. But as Catholics, we must do what we can, from where we are, to be living signs of the Church’s solidarity with workers and their unions—we must pick up the mantle of labor justice and do our part. Inviting fellow parishioners, neighbors, and all the workers we know to attend our parish Labor Day Mass is a wonderful place for each of us to start. Please email me to join the parish Labor Team (htlaura1@gmail.com). ♦

Loving Your Neighbor with Your Words

By Jackie Beilhart

One of the ways that we interact with others is through our language and word choice. Unfortunately, the words we use can sometimes cause pain to those who hear them. You might be familiar with the “spread the word to end the word” campaign to encourage people to stop using the word “retard(ed),” as people with intellectual disabilities and their allies find the word offensive and derogatory. Similar campaigns exist to stop the use of the word “gay” as a synonym for “bad” or “uncool.”

There are still many words used in this vein that aren’t as well recognized. For instance, “lame” (hurts the disabled communities), “gypped” (hurts the Roma community), and “crazy” or “insane” (hurts the mentally ill community when used as a negative term). Sadly, such calls for us to stop using these words can be met with resistance from others who claim that our society has become too focused on political correctness.

Based on my graduate studies concerning communication and minority communities, I believe that this resistant response comes from two sources: Those outside the minority community in question often have no idea how damaging these particular vocabulary choices are. While a single incident might not seem

injurious, the terminology for it is a microaggression.

Dr. Derald Wing Sue, a leading scholar on microaggressions, explains them as smaller (indirect or subtle) incidents of discriminatory behavior like racism, sexism, ableism (discrimination against individuals with disabilities), and homophobia. These incidents send the message to the recipients that he or she is inferior.

For example, when you want to communicate that you think an activity is not fun, if you use the word “lame” instead of “not fun,” a person could understandably feel your statement carries the subtext of: being disabled makes a person inferior. The key is that these incidents of microaggression occur with such regularity that the individual events, combined, have a large cumulative negative effect on the recipient.

Microaggressions also continually single out an individual’s “difference” furthering the feeling of alienation. Regularly hearing subtexts that “lame=bad” or “gay=other,” cause a powerful injury to a person’s self-perception.

Another reason people claim that others are “overreacting” to uses of discriminatory words is due to the concept of “majority group fragility” (often discussed as white fragility). People using a prejudicial word are often not consciously committing a microaggression. Because it is not conscious, these people find it hard to accept that they did something discriminatory,

Microaggressions, continued on page 11

Microaggression, continued from page 10 especially since it challenges their perception of being a good person who is not biased against minorities.

Dr. Robin DiAngelo, an expert on white fragility, discusses how, as a society, we tend to see discriminatory practices (like racism, sexism, ableism, and homophobia) in black and white terms. For example, if you do something sexist, you are a bad person, and good people do not engage in ableist behavior.

But reality has many gray spaces. Someone in a majority group frequently may not know that certain actions are harmful to

minority groups. To be a moral person, we should admit that we can be wrong and cause others pain unknowingly. We should also listen. If people tell us that we hurt them, we should be grateful they were willing to put themselves out on a limb to express their feelings (it can be hard to tell people that they did something wrong!). We should learn as much as we can and strive to avoid doing it again. We should also try to engage deeply with those outside our community to increase our chances for learning. These engagements could be in the people we talk to, the movies we watch, or the authors we read.

While some say that our society

is too focused on political correctness, thinking about our use of language makes us think about communities different than our own. Instead of using the word “lame” or “gay” pejoratively, we can use words that actually have a negative meaning like “not cool” or “no fun.” We can choose to use the word “cheated” instead of “gypped.” As an alternate to “crazy” or “insane,” try “wild,” “ridiculous,” “chaotic,” or “unbelievable.”

English is a rich language, and once you start, you’ll find it is quite easy to find a word that does not injure others. Making different word choices gives us the opportunity to love our neighbor. ♦

Reflections from OLQP Social Justice Minister Michelle Knight

Below are the parting words from Michelle Knight, the Social Justice and Outreach Minister for the past five years at OLQP. This announcement was printed in the church bulletin and certainly worth sharing again. Michelle notes that it has been an honor to work with the OLQP community, but in the same respect, it has been an honor for our church to have her serve in this ministry, expanding our social outreach exponentially and doing so with wisdom and compassion. We will miss you, Michelle!

“It is with much sorrow that I have to announce that I will be leaving my position as Social Justice and Outreach Minister at the end of July. My husband has accepted a new position in Erie, PA, and we will be moving there in early August. It is a great opportunity for him, and we could not turn it down.

We are both very sad to leave this incredible parish; it has truly been a home for our family. Serving as the parish social justice minister has been an amazing experience for me. I always tell people that the best place to be a social justice minister is Our Lady Queen of Peace—our parishioners are filled with a desire to be disciples-in-action. All I have to do is keep the opportunities available and programs and ministries happen! I have been fully supported by all of you who volunteer your time in so many ways to carry out our mission of Matt 25. It has been an honor to work with you and for you. I will miss this work and this parish more than I can say. Thank you!” ♦



L-R: Abby, Michelle, and Ivor Knight

Parting Words from Katie Remedios, Director of Religious Education

After five incredible years as Director of Religious Education, Katie Remedios has stepped down from her post, although thankfully she is coming back in the Fall on a part-time basis to “focus . . . on rebuilding and strengthening the Family Circle program. The touching letter she wrote to the OLQP community is below. While we are saddened to know Katie will no longer direct the education program, we are overjoyed she will still remain involved in religious education of the children at OLQP.

Katie’s words speak volumes about her compassionate commitment to teach all children about Jesus and how God loves all of us passionately just the way we are. What better way to show this than in her own words. Here is Katie’s letter:



Remedios Family: Deacon Tony & Katie, Jesse, Sara, Jared, Jon, Taylor, Steve, Sean, Cailan

“When someone asks me what I do for a living, I get to say I have the best job in the world . . . teaching children about how much they are loved by God!

After many years of shaping a program of faith development for the parish, it is with a heavy heart that I announce my resignation as your Director of Religious Education. It has been an honor to serve the community, work with so many amazing children, and support hundreds of parents as the first and best teacher of the faith. I have completed everything that I was asked to do when first recruited by the staff of OLQP: to build a system of faith formation that allows our children to not only know Jesus, but to love and serve him as disciples in action.

After designing programs to prepare our children for the sacraments and expose our little ones to the foundations of our tradition, the time has come to move on. I plan to take a two-month sabbatical, beginning in July, hiking, traveling, and spending quality time with my family. In September, at the request of the pastor, I have agreed to return on a part-time basis and focus my attention on rebuilding and strengthening the Family Circle program. This program has successfully served many and is being studied and introduced all over the country as the true path to faith formation.

My activities will include developing accessible Circle lessons, writing seven grade levels of curriculum for our Catholic Foundation classes, and planning Children’s Liturgies. I will continue to advocate for adequate instruction space and inclusive opportunities to serve our children (and yes, sponsor the parish pie-baking event at Thanksgiving).

To sustain the faith of one child, studies show that it takes fifteen people in the pews to model, connect, interact, educate, welcome, and love the child. My parting wish as the Director of Religious Education is to ask the community to remember this, “It takes a village.” And what an extraordinary village we have!

In profound gratitude for your trust, support, and many prayers over the years.” ♦

Advocate Staff:

Paula Cruickshank, Editor: 703-533-7355,
cruicksp@yahoo.com

Feature Writers: **Sally HARRS, Jack Sullivan, Kathy Desmond, Sue Carlson, M.D., Laura Bandini, Jackie Beilhart, Michelle Knight, and Katie Remedios**

Jackie Beilhart, Layout Design

Jeannette Gantz Daly, Distribution

Please send an email message to jgantzdaly@olqpva.org to receive *The Advocate* by email or to have it sent to your home address.