

On Line and On Point

MARY MOTHER OF JESUS INCLUSIVE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

marymotherofjesus.org

HEAR IT NOW—Discernment is important when we face a decision, but it is equally important when God surprises us with new possibilities. And God will surprise us — often! When we aren't looking for new opportunities, when we aren't at a crossroads, God will still whisper to "the ear of our heart," asking us to journey with God — wherever that may lead.

There is no right or wrong answer here, it is purely the choice to let God into our lives as a partner and guide. However, this is not a choice made once and for all.

The choice to welcome God into our lives, into all that we are, is a daily active opening that requires us to keep putting one foot in front of the other, moving with God even when we do not know where we are going.

That is the action we are called to in the spirit of Advent: not just expectant waiting on God to act, but the intentional desire to let

God be with us in all the ups and downs of life. The season of Advent is an opportunity to realize that God doesn't want to be part of our plans only when we face a difficult choice or when we need a miracle. God wants to be with us in everything, always.

The culmination of Advent celebrates the day God so loved the world that God came to dwell with us. We prepare to celebrate the moment when we will usher in the Christmas season at midnight, when we will welcome God With Us, by actively opening ourselves to God who is always with us. We are not just waiting; we are practicing with every choice and every step along the way. It is easy to forget God's invitation is to actively participate with God while we journey through the sacred night of Advent toward Christmas morning.

Practice searching your personal night sky for a new star. Stay active. Stay awake. And stay open. —from an article in *National Catholic Reporter*



MMOJ
Community
CHRISTMAS
MASS
on Zoom
Friday, Dec 24
4 PM

entitled, "Advent's expectant waiting includes a call to faithful action," by Amanda Carrier.

OFFERINGS— We are grateful for your continued contribution toward the growth and development of our community. Thank you. Please remember to make your regular donations to MMOJ by sending your check to MMOJ % St. Andrew UCC, 6908 Beneva Road, Sarasota, FL 34238.

Remember: MMOJ continues to donate 5% of all received offerings each month to Outreach, which will continue to focus on real issues of food and hunger in our surrounding communities.

OUTREACH—The current recipient of our offered financial support continues to be All Faiths Food Bank of Sarasota [AFFB] in its mission of providing food for hungry and needy children.

Hunger deprives children of more than just-food.

Child hunger equals serious health consequences as well as negative impacts on prospects for future success. Your gift is critical in helping to provide the nutritious food boys and girls need to learn, grow, and thrive.

You can help keep them full all year long by supporting All Faiths Food Bank's Campaign Against Childhood Hunger—our community's strongest line of defense against child hunger. Through our partners and various programs, AFFB works hard to make sure children receive the help they need. Child hunger is a problem we can solve together.

FRAGILE LIFE, HOLY LIFE—It was our second day in Erie, Pennsylvania. I was about ten years old. "Momma," I said, "This is the place where I want to live." My mother smiled a little. "And how

Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community Mission Statement

We are a Christ-centered community of equals, consisting of women and men, ordained and non-ordained, empowered by the Spirit whose mission is to worship, to serve, to promote compassion, justice and care for creation. Come join us.

Send articles/info by Wed to be published on weekend: rjbannerusa@gmail.com

can you be so sure of that so soon, Joan?" she said. "You've hardly seen the place." My mother was a practical woman. She didn't do things without "a good reason." "Because," I said back, sure of the logic of my argument, "there are trees on every street here." And indeed there were. Trees and thick bushes in big yards and wild grasses in open lots and live flowers everywhere. The place vibrated life.



I was sure then that I was correct in my criteria and I'm even more sure of it now. The truth is that life is not only about living. Life is also, purely and simply, about life, about the holiness of creation, about God's love incarnate in the world around us. And, interestingly enough, I realize more and more every year, it is the spark of the divine in life that Christmas is meant to celebrate. It is fragile life, holy life, that Christmas hallows, that Christmas calls us to recognize, that Christmas reminds us to bow down before as we go.

How is it that we have lost our capacity to see the Creator in creation? Is it possible that those who cannot see the divine in the created world have missed Jesus also? Is it possible that those who miss the humanity of Jesus miss the holiness of the rest of creation as a result? Celebrate life.—
Joan Chittister

MOVIE CORNER

Thanks to Russ for finding the powerful and sensitive film, **Joe Bell**. Mark Wahlburg and Gary Sinise join an outstanding cast of relatively unknown actors to present a real stove top-hot issue of bullying. This emotional and moving true life story is currently streaming on Amazon Prime. You will want to check it out.

Send your comments, criticisms, suggestions, to pnce.beth@gmail.com —*Beth Ponce*

VATICAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS—Catholic Women's groups are urging the Vatican to sign an agreement protecting human rights and banning

discrimination based on race, religion, gender or political beliefs.

Even though this commitment to human rights has been ratified by 47 European states, the Vatican won't sign this commitment because the hierarchy promotes policies that discriminate against baptized members in the Church who follow their consciences including women priests who are promoting spiritual renewal and transformative justice in inclusive ministries and communities around the world.

In the recent update of Canon Law, Pope Francis failed to correct the mischaracterization of the ordination of a woman priest as a "grave crime" that is in the same category as clerical sex abuse.

The real "grave crime" against the Church is not committed by women following their call to sacred orders, but, by the Vatican hierarchy who covered-up decades of clergy sexual abuse of minors around the world.

The excommunication of prophetic women living a renewed priestly ministry in people-empowered faith communities is an outrageous injustice that should alarm Catholics everywhere.

While Pope Francis is a strong advocate of human rights on social justice issues such as the plight of migrants, he does not connect the full of equality of women in the Church and in the world as



interrelated to poverty, violence, environmental degradation, and the flourishing of life on the planet.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the following European women's groups, named in the article, for advocating that the Vatican sign this document supporting human rights for everyone, everywhere: "Catholic Women Speak in Britain; We Are Church in Ireland, Germany and Austria; Women for the Church in Italy; Voices of Faith in Rome and Liechtenstein, as well as similar progressive Catholic groups in Spain, France, Croatia and Switzerland."—*from an article published by the Associated Press entitled "Women Urge Vatican to Sign Europe Rights Convention," by Nicole Winfield, and from Bridget Mary Meehan's blog*

STAFF—*Russ Banner, editor; Joan Pesce, Lee Breyer, Anna Davis, text review; Beth Ponce and Dotty Shugrue, features*

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2. PURSUING NONVIOLENCE—Year II—Supporting our community need to renew a vow of nonviolence for a second time. Heading toward January 1st.

PURSUING NONVIOLENCE—By John Dear—*continued*—NONVIOLENCE TOWARD OURSELVES.

Some of us are steeped in violence, raised in violence to be violent toward everyone, beginning with ourselves. The journey toward interior nonviolence begins with non-cooperation with our own inner violence.

From now on, we try not to beat ourselves up, put ourselves down, or be violent toward ourselves. We try to make peace with ourselves, make friends with ourselves, and create a place of peace within where the God of peace can dwell.

We do not want to be wounded wounding, but wounded healers as Henri Nouwen taught. So we are gentle with ourselves, and practice self-care and self-compassion. As activists, we have to be especially mindful. When we take to the streets and engage the dominant culture—if we are not on our game—our lingering inner violence can be triggered, and we do not want that. So we practice daily meditation, mindfulness and self-reflection to cultivate inner peace and deepen our nonviolence in order to be better public peacemakers.

NONVIOLENCE TOWARDS ALL PEOPLE, ALL CREATURES AND ALL CREATION

While we deepen in interior nonviolence, we want to sharpen our interpersonal nonviolence. From now on, we try to be meticulously nonviolent toward everyone we meet.

This sounds good on paper, but it is devilishly hard. We will never be perfectly nonviolent; we're all experts in violence. But as followers of the

nonviolent Jesus, we try and be nonviolent to everyone—our families, our children, our parents, our neighbors, or coworkers, and everyone in our community. We try not to hurt anyone, but live,

speaking and acting within the boundaries of nonviolence. So we forgive all those who hurt us, drop all our resentments and anger, try to outdo one another in loving kindness, and widen our circle into the beloved community. As we deepen our interpersonal nonviolence, it can open our hearts into universal peace—that is, universal solidarity with the

human family, which Gandhi taught was the heart of nonviolence.

That is why we attend especially to those who push our buttons, those who might provoke us. Oddly enough, they become our teachers. They expose our violence and show us our need to deepen in nonviolence. So the difficult people in our lives become a great blessing as they help us experiment with and practice nonviolence, patience, and unconditional love.

As our nonviolence widens, we try to be consciously nonviolent toward all creatures. **This means, for starters, we have to become vegetarians, if not vegans. We try to be nonviolent to Mother Earth in every way possible,** so that we are in greater

solidarity with all creation in this time of climate crisis.—*to be continued*

"I will not get better through simply willing myself to change. I will not get better by trying to do the hard work alone. I cannot become a person of nonviolence without a commitment to formal practices of

accountability and I cannot build those structures without asking for help. I am not good at asking for help."—*Matt Harper, a long-time activist with LA Catholic Worker*

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JANUARY 1, 2022—WORLD DAY OF PEACE
We are invited as a community, to renew the Vow of Nonviolence, which we initially enacted as a community last January 1.
To prepare for this event, please read over our texts published these three weeks before the event, prepare personally with prayer, and you might be moved to invite another friend or family member to join with us.