



THE VISITATION

THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVITY HOUSE

OCTOBER 2016

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 4

Combating Climate Change with the Power of Community

by Kayla Jacobs

“Enlighten those who possess power...the poor and the Earth are crying out.”

—Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* 246, A
Christian Prayer in Union with Creation

This summer I had the opportunity to join 60+ faith leaders in New Orleans for the Greenfaith annual Climate Convergence. This multi-religious experience brought together emerging leaders (millennials) from all over the U.S. and Canada to dialogue about goals and hopes, share resources, skills, and talents, and develop and strengthen action plans to address climate change. I learned so much during my week in Louisiana but the most valuable was the importance of community.

The message of community hit home



for me before I even arrived to the convergence. I had an early flight to New Orleans so I grabbed a meal with a friend and went to a park that overlooks the city. As we looked at his city, his home, he expressed all of the issues they have to deal with regarding water pollution and climate change, noting that they receive all that the Mississippi brings. That realization hit me like a ton of bricks. Being from the Midwest, and I grew up not far from the great Mississippi, I knew exactly what he was talking about. The chemical run off from industrial farms and factories along the river is a real problem for life downstream. I felt the weight of guilt and apologized to him. The reality of how interconnected we are set the tone for the rest of the week.

The days to follow were filled with
...continued on page 4

All Things In Common

by Hannah Kubiak

This August we hosted a Farm to Table Event here at the Nativity House, to encourage awareness and support for our mission, as well as to enjoy a healthy, home-grown meal. Local chefs donated their time and talent and prepared a five-course meal made with ingredients from our community garden. In total we had about seventy guests come to enjoy a time of food and fellowship outside.

The event was a great success, and a testament to the community that has come together around this house. Being at the Farm to Table reminded me of the Book of Acts, at the time when the Apostles were preaching and baptizing and the Christian community was beginning to form around them. “The faithful all lived together, and owned everything in common” (Acts 2:44). In the early days of Christianity, people were eager to give, and they trusted that when brothers and sisters live in community, those who give also receive. This is something I wish we had more of in our

...continued on page 4

World Youth Day: A Risky Journey

by Venus Wozniak

*“Here. In this place.
In this encounter of the universal church.
THERE IS HOPE.
And it's not a minuscule amount.”*

When I left for World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland, on July 26, the summer air hung heavy with terrorist attacks, police inflicted racial violence, and police shootings. When telling people of my travel plans, I could see fear flicker in their eyes – they feared for our safety in the World Youth Day crowds. When discussing safety with my co-leader, Fr. Mark Fracaro, he assured our pilgrim families that in all the World Youth Days since 1991 there has never been a terrorist attack.

On the first day in Krakow, our guide led us through the streets to the city center. We rounded a bend in the road, through the park that surrounds the city center and I saw the crowds, the colors, the flags. My

...continued on page 6

A Letter from the Directors:

Dear Friends of Nativity House,

The Harvest is upon us! As we wrap up the summer in the garden, we have many exciting changes to share with you.

This summer saw the arrival of two new interns, Sarah and Hannah. Sarah works full time in parish ministry and part-time with us. She arrived in May. Hannah has spent the last three summers as a Totus Tuus missionary and 2015-2016 as a NET volunteer in Scotland. She moved in and became our full time intern in August. We said good-bye to Theresa in August. She was with us for fourteen months. She has moved on for another year of service with the Denver Vincentian Volunteers. We are so blessed to have spent the year living and learning with her. Join us in prayers of gratitude for all of our former and new interns.

We also hosted our largest event to date, the 2nd annual Farm to Table Celebration. This was a major undertaking supported by five guest chefs, more than fifteen volunteers, it raised significant support that will help Nativity House throughout the year.

The summer also brought many volunteers from high school and college groups who come to work outside and learn about the issues that Nativity House addresses. We also hosted a major volunteer work day event that brought new people to the house in service.

This fall we will have another volunteer work day to closeout the garden and chop up trees for property maintenance and firewood. We will also host a round table the topic of "Mercy-building in a wall-building culture." These round tables bring people together to discuss the issues of the day and the build-up our local community. They also are a great way to find out more about Nativity House.

Saturday, Nov. 5 - Volunteer Work Day

We will work in the garden and wood pile from 1-4pm. A bonfire will be lit at 4pm. Dinner will be served at 4:30pm.

Friday, Nov 11 - Roundtable Discussion

Mercy-building in a Wall-building Culture. The potluck Dinner begins at 6:30pm discussion to follow around 7:15pm

We at Nativity house are so grateful to all of our interns, volunteers, prayer warriors and especially those that participated in the Farm to Table and the many volunteer events. You make up the Nativity House community! We are so honored to share life with you. Your support is what makes our work a joyful reality.

Love & Prayers,
Venus & Justin Wozniak

WISHLIST:

Stamps
Target gift cards
Gas cards
Fill dirt
Patio furniture
Gravel

About The Visitation

This newspaper, *The Visitation*, is a publication on topics of social justice, spirituality and theology. It is published four times a year by the Nativity House. Submissions are accepted from readers everywhere.

To contact us, email us at:

newspaper@nativity-house.org

Past issues are online at:

<http://www.nativity-house.org>

About Nativity House

Nativity House serves as a shelter for first-time mothers in need of residence in the southwest Chicago suburbs. The Nativity House operates an on-site community supported farm (CSA) that provides nourishment for the Nativity House and the greater community. Overall, we envision a healing environment focused on the dignity of each person, the dignity of work and stewardship of the earth.

Nativity House is administered by a board of directors and an advisory committee of individuals with a broad range of experience. Nativity House has formed positive relationships with relevant local organizations that are extremely helpful in carrying out the mission of the house. Nativity House was recognized as a public charity in August, 2011.

To connect with us, please email Venus Wozniak at:

venusad@nativity-house.org

Postal mail should be addressed to:

Nativity House
17141 W. 143rd St.
Lockport, IL 60441

We extend the sincerest thanks to all.

Invitation Feminists for Life

by Serrin M. Foster

“When a man steals to satisfy hunger, we may safely conclude that there is something wrong in society—so when a woman destroys the life of her unborn child, it is an evidence that either by education or circumstances she has been greatly wronged.”

—Mattie Brinkerhoff, *The Revolution*, 1869

When I created the slogan Women Deserve Better® than Abortion, I didn’t simply mean saying “no” to abortion. It meant saying “yes” to the resources that support pregnant women and their children, before and after birth. Abortion is an indication that we have not met the needs of women. Abortion masks the unmet needs of women in the workplace, schools, home, and society. Abortion hurts the most vulnerable in society, the poor, the working poor, women in difficult and often abusive relationships, and students and women in the workplace whose basic needs are ignored.

Feminists for Life is dedicated to systematically eliminating the root causes that drive women to abortion, primarily lack of practical resources and support through holistic, woman - centered solutions.

Women deserve better than abortion. Women have sought real solutions since entering the workforce. Women want and deserve equal opportunities for pay and position in the workplace, flex time, telecommuting, job sharing, comprehensive health care, maternity benefits and parental leave, affordable, quality child care, shared parental responsibility and child support.

Feminists for Life has been leading a similar discussion with students, administrators,

and professors on college campuses. Both students and faculty want more resources, affordable housing, financial aid and scholarship security, maternity coverage in student health plans, accessible child care, flexible class scheduling, counseling services, and publicized policies that support pregnant women and parents. Students and staff need a central place on campus to coordinate these services. No woman should be forced to choose between relinquishing her education and career plans or suffering through a humiliating, invasive procedure and sacrificing her child. We refuse to choose.

Abortion represents a failure to listen and respond to the unmet needs of women. Why perpetuate failure? Pro-life feminists recognize abortion as a symptom of, not a solution to, the continuing struggles women face in the workplace, on campus, at home, and in the world at large.

Feminists for Life is a renaissance of the original American feminism. Like Susan B. Anthony and other early American suffragists, today’s pro-life feminists envision a better world, where no woman would be driven by desperation to abortion: A world in which pregnancy, motherhood, and birthmotherhood are accepted and supported. Campuses and workplaces that support mothers in practical ways, rather than forcing them to choose between

their education or career plans and their children. A society that supports the role of mothers and values the role of fathers and helps fathers provide both financial and emotional support for their children. A culture where parents are respected, whether they stay at home or return to work.

We have worked for low-income women. We have worked to prevent violence against women, including pregnant women. We have worked to protect women from being forced into unwanted abortions. We have worked to reduce poverty among women and children, prevent coerced abortions due to threats to withhold child support, and instead encourage the active support of fathers in the lives of their children.

We have led the revolution on campus through the FFL College Outreach Program to meet the needs of college-age women who have the highest rate of abortion. In the decade following the launch of the College Outreach Program in 1994, there was a dramatic 30 percent decrease in abortions among college-educated women.

Unfortunately, the Guttmacher Institute’s new report reveals things have gotten worse over the last eight years for the most vulnerable, and so Feminists for Life’s work is now more vital than ever. We believe that education is key to fighting the feminization of poverty. Seventy-five percent of abortions are performed on the poor, working poor, and economically disadvantaged. FFL Pregnancy Resource Forums on top campuses across the country inspired Pregnancy Assistance Fund which will, in part, help transform campuses in support of pregnant and parenting students, birthmothers. We advocate workplace solutions that benefit both employee and employer. And we have educated the pro-life and

feminist movements about America’s rich pro-life feminist history. Our message that Women Deserve Better® than Abortion is redirecting the polarized debate toward woman centered solutions.

When I found Feminists for Life, I knew I was home. I wasn’t interested in criminalizing women who had abortions. I am driven by freeing women from abortion through resources and support. You too can be proud to be a part of the solutions. Join us, because women don’t have to settle for less, because there is a better way. And yes, this invitation extends to men who have a right to share in the joy and responsibility of caring for our children.

For more reasons you can be proud to be a member of Feminists for Life, I invite you to visit

<http://www.feministsforlife.org>
To join us and support our work on behalf of the most vulnerable, please visit
<http://www.feministsforlife.org/support>



Serrin is the creator of the Women Deserve Better® campaign. Her landmark speech, “The Feminist Case Against Abortion,” has been recognized as one of the “great speeches in history” in an anthology called Women’s Rights. She has focused on developing on-campus resources and support for underserved pregnant and parenting students and is an outspoken opponent of pregnancy discrimination. Serrin has led Feminists for Life since 1994.

Combating Climate Change

...continued from page 1

new friends, learning about the many faiths that were represented, hearing stories from Louisianans, and prayer. We heard a panel of Hurricane Katrina survivors. We spent a day on the bayou, a place known as “ground zero of climate change,” visiting the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe of the Isle de Jean Charles, who are among the first climate refugees in the U.S. and recently received a \$48 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to resettle the entire community. We held an interfaith prayer service outside of Majority Whip Rep. Steve Scalise’s office, who is a Catholic and a climate change denier. We met with a fisherman named Coy who said places he used to ride a horse to now takes an over hour long boat ride to get to and who, despite being a 4th generation fisherman, is hesitating to teach his children the trade because of its unsustainability. The places we visited and the people we met had a weird way of making us feel both a sense of despair and a sense of hope.

During the panel with the Katrina survivors a convergence attendee raised her hand to express her appreciation for Robert Green, who lost his 3 year old granddaughter and mother in the storm. As she began to speak she started to cry. She, a young mother from drought struck California who is expecting another child in months to come, expressed her fear for her children and future generations. Robert’s story of loss, resilience, and hope touched her and as she was crying and expressing her

gratitude he walked down from the panel and held her in his arms and said: “You’ve got to keep on fighting [for justice] and when you get scared, hug somebody.” This is community. Community is when a mother from California and a grandfather from Louisiana hug it out over a shared passion for an issue that affects them both. Community is caring about future generations. Community is an entire tribe being displaced and they still persevere and work together to preserve their culture and history. Community is when people from many faiths and backgrounds come together to protect the earth and make the world a safer place. Community is being honest with ourselves and apologizing to our brothers and sisters downstream.

My dear brothers and sisters, you too are part of this community. When Christ said “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt. 18:20). He wasn’t only referring to prayer but also action. Our individual and societal actions have an actual effect on communities locally, nationally, and globally. To quote a friend I met at the convergence, Austin Sisson: “Wherever you stand on climate change, you aren’t standing close enough if your shoes aren’t getting wet.” In other words be with the people, in community. Hear their stories.

We must never lose sight of being a community; we were created for it (Gn. 2:18). Climate change is a vast, complex, and urgent issue. It is going to take all of us to save the earth. It is going to take people of all faiths, of all nations, and of all political views. It is going to take you and me.

Since my visit to Louisiana the

state is suffering a major, unprecedented flooding. The flood has taken the lives of 13 people and has destroyed the homes of thousands. Some of the communities I visited were affected by the disaster. Community support and love is needed now more than ever.



Kayla is the Coordinator of Justice and Peace for the Diocese of Joliet’s Office for Human Dignity. Follow her on twitter @KaylaSueJacobs and the Justice and Peace Ministry @paxjoliet

This article is adapted and originally posted on the PaxBlog: <https://paxjoliet.wordpress.com/>

All Things In Common

...continued from page 1

world today. It seems like we have so much, but are so reluctant to part with any of it, in spite of, or perhaps even because of the great quantity.

The community that has grown around the Nativity House is a refreshing reminder of what can be accomplished when people share their talents and resources, and the Farm to Table event was a wonderful example of what this community can do when everyone puts in their bit. So many people helped us during the preparations of this event, whether it be through donations of time, talent, or goods. Local businesses donated gift cards to our silent auction, and artists and crafters gave their beautiful creations to benefit the Nativity House mission. The generosity of our volunteers and benefactors was and continues to be amazing. Everyone who came over to the house as we prepared for this event thought of nothing as their own, but gave freely.

This event reminded me of my own community that I grew up

with back home, and one moment in particular sticks in my memory. A man from the community shared his ladder with several different families, and it rotated from house to house, depending on who needed to cut tree branches or clean their gutters. One day, the owner of the ladder came to my house to collect it. When he asked for his ladder back, my mom was confused, because she was convinced the ladder belonged to her. His generosity was so great, that all sense of ownership had faded, and what remained was a community in which brothers and sisters shared where there was a need. Another moment when my childhood community stepped up was when my mom got overwhelmed with life as a single mother and completely left the yard work by the wayside. Several families set aside a Saturday to work in her yard, weeding, trimming hedges, mowing the lawn, and it was all finished before dinner time. It just goes to show you that working in community is quicker than working alone (and it’s infinitely more fun!)

The Farm to Table event was just such an event, in which many had a part and gave generously. Because of this, the event was a great success, and everyone left well-fed and nurtured by the gift of Christian fellowship. We would like to give a big thank you to everyone who helped prepare and who attended! Let us strive to be more generous stewards of what we have been given, and remember that when we give, we also receive in abundance!



Hannah is a graduate of Franciscan University of Steubenville and an intern at the Nativity House.

The Only Adequate Response

by David Spesia

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, an Albanian-born nun who served the poorest of the poor in India, was canonized on September 4th in St. Peter's Square. In his homily at the canonization, Pope Francis called her "A generous dispenser of divine mercy," and "emblematic figure of womanhood and of the consecrated life." Her feast day is September 5th, and she is the patron of World Youth Day and The Missionaries of Charity.

The witness of our newest St. Teresa is simple but provocative: It was the decision to do little things with great love for the Lord's beloved least, those who are most undesirable and most unwanted.

The great love with which Mother Teresa rattled the world was simply a matter of willing the good of those who are most in need. It was a matter of loving those who are most Other, those who are most despised, those who are most easily dismissed and discarded. This is the answer in a world

seemingly turned upside down and inside out. It is the necessary and sufficient response to increasing turmoil; it is the only way to right-size the disorders of our day.

Indeed, the way of self-sacrificing love changes everything it touches. It provides a piercing new perspective on those whom we may have previously feared or written off or ignored.

So, in honor of St. Teresa of Kolkata, perhaps we might consider naming those whom are the least in the world as we see it



today. Are they immigrants and refugees? The elderly or the unborn or the incarcerated? The unemployed or the underemployed? The homeless or the home-bound? Those trying to survive in violent neighborhoods or in failing schools? The disabled or those with special needs of any kind? Addicts of all kinds?

If we actually dared to identify those most in danger of being dismissed as "unclean" or "unworthy," then we would be poised to find some small thing to do on their behalf. If we could do just one small thing with great love, we would walk the path of Mother Teresa, sharing the love of Jesus with those on the margins.

Perhaps it would be praying for these little ones of the Lord--it's a spiritual work of mercy, after all. Perhaps it would be finding some way to learn more

about their perspective or their challenges, to find points of contact where we might make some small gesture of solidarity on their behalf.

Isn't it time to take measure of our love? If it is to be truly Christian love, then it cannot stop with our family and friends. Indeed, to paraphrase a quote from St. Francis de Sales, one which Mother Teresa seemed to embody: "The measure of love is to will the good of the Other, without measure."

St. Teresa of Kolkata, pray for us!



David is a husband and father of five. He is honored to serve the Diocese of Joliet as Secretary of Evangelization and Catechesis.

"Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."

(Bl. Saint Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 41)

Easy Essays: They and We

by Peter Maurin (1877-1949)



People say:

"They don't do this, they don't do that, they ought to do this, they ought to do that." Always "They" and never "I."

People should say:

"They are crazy for doing this and not doing that but I don't need to be crazy the way they are crazy."

The Communitarian Revolution is basically a personal revolution.

It starts with I, not with They.

One I plus one I makes two I's and two I's make We.

We is a community, while "they" is a crowd.

World Youth Day

...continued from page 1

heart leapt. This is why we came. I observed the 26 teens of our group soak it all in – that first day – their first encounter with the universal church. The spark in their eye only grew to a roaring flame by the end of our two week pilgrimage. That first night at the opening ceremonies of World Youth Day there were estimated five hundred thousand people gathered. By the end of festivities, culminating with the Papal Mass on Sunday, July 31 there were over three million people gathered.

Did I always feel safe? No. Never did I feel like I was in any bodily harm, but the safety of my comfort zone was blasted to pieces.

Rewind to summer of 1993; Denver, Colorado, with St. John Paul II. I was fifteen years old. It was my first encounter with the universal church. My life was forever changed. Growing up in the Bible Belt, there were all kinds of reasons and allurements to not remain Catholic. Non-Catholic Youth Groups competed for Catholic Youth. After my first experience of the Universal Church, I was hooked. I will never forget my spiritual senses awaking to the sound of hundreds of thousands all singing Alleluia! Both in Toronto with St. John Paul II in 2002 and this summer with Pope Francis, I watched the youth that I led awaken to the same realization: we are part of something much bigger than we could have ever imagined.

In Blonia Park, where we waited for the arrival of Pope Francis, members of our pilgrim group ran from group to group collecting selfies. “I just met pilgrims from Australia!” The list goes on and on - Nigeria,

Germany, Poland, France, Ireland, England, Lebanon, Syria. America Magazine reported that pilgrims from 187 countries participated in World Youth Day, Krakow.

One night, after festivities, Fr. Mark and I ducked into a restaurant to wait for the crowds to thin out. There were pilgrims from Germany at the next table. There we met a young, newly married couple. Their aunt had purchased the World Youth Day Pilgrimage for them and insisted they go. Paula and Jaeger were very clear that they had no idea what they were getting in to but were overwhelmed by the “pilgrim spirit.” Paula exclaimed, “I love it here because here we are citizens of the universe. We are not German or Brazilian. We are children of God.” All else fell away and we became aware of our true identity.

These days, as a society and a nation, it is much easier and less risky to stay within the confines of our national identity. The “us” and “them” ideology seems to keep us safe. We don’t have to worry about understanding another perspective or opening our heart to care for those with a different world view. This is safe. At World Youth Day we gathered, three million of us, with a common goal – to be taught by Pope Francis and to enter into prayer with the universal church.

At the end of each day, I asked the teens, “what did you take away from this day?” Many of the answers were the same, “being in the same place with so many people from so many different countries.” Or, “just how kind and welcoming everyone is.” But one day a different answer came from one young woman, “hearing from Catholics from Iraq and Syria

and their struggles with practicing their faith when they are persecuted for it. We don’t ever think about it. I think we take our faith for granted.” Much of that day had been spent listening to witness talks and first-hand accounts of refugees from the Middle East but also from those who survived that persecution of Catholics during the Russian occupation of Poland. We were invited to enter into their stories. Listening to the struggles, tribulations, joys of our brothers and sisters in war-torn parts of the world opened us up. It made us uncomfortable. It helped us realize the privilege that we carry by being citizens in a country where being Catholic is easy. When we are able to understand different world views and the struggles of others we become agents of mercy. Here comfort and safety become secondary.

“Following Jesus demands a good dose of courage, a readiness to trade in the sofa for a pair of walking shoes and to

set out on new and uncharted paths. To blaze trails that open up new horizons capable of spreading joy, the joy that is born of God’s love and wells up in your hearts with every act of mercy” (Pope Francis, World Youth Day Prayer Vigil, July 30, 2016).

Someone recently told me that following the Gospel today is too challenging and thus not relevant. I think that we forget that it wasn’t easy when Jesus first began preaching the message of love and mercy. It made a lot of people uncomfortable and feel unsafe. Some took the message to heart and changed the way they were living – a life full of risk, discomfort and joy. Others heard the message and their hearts were hardened; these were the ones that made sure the man who challenged their comfort and safety was put to death. Those early Christians understood the courage

...continued on page 7



Venus with two friends, Lydia and Robert, World Youth Day pilgrims from Egypt.

World Youth Day

...continued from page 6

necessary to blaze trails of spreading the Good News. Now we are called to follow in their footsteps. For the six days of World Youth Day we were molded by stories and lives of others radically living the Gospel. Their lives of risk, discomfort and the joy and peace they exuded was extremely alluring. Four of these days we were blessed to be in the presence of Pope Francis. Each teaching that he delivered called us out of our comfort zones into the arms of love and mercy.

“Launch us on the adventure of mercy! Launch us on the adventure of building bridges and tearing down walls, barriers and barbed wire. Launch us on the adventure of helping the poor, those who feel lonely and abandoned, or no longer find meaning in their lives. Send us, like Mary of Bethany, to listen attentively to those we do not understand, those of other cultures and peoples, even those we are afraid of because we consider them a threat. Make us attentive to our elders, as Mary of Nazareth was to Elizabeth, in order to learn from their wisdom.

Here we are, Lord! Send us to share your merciful love...We want to affirm that our lives are fulfilled when they are shaped by mercy, for that is the better part, and it will never be taken from us.” (Pope Francis, WYD Welcoming Ceremony, July 28, 2016).

Today in these tenuous times, it is very easy and safe to remain within the confines of what is comfortable. It would have been easy for me to stay

home in the face of one more terrorist attack. But three million of my fellow Children of God chose to be formed by being called out of their comfort zones. We showed up for those six days and our lives will never be the same. We are witness to the Hope that lies in Mercy. We carry that with us. Be warned. We have been given a mission. We plan to carry it out. Will you join us?



Venus is a wife, mother, and Director of Nativity House. She can be contacted at: venus@nativity-house.org

Living Communion

...continued from page 7

from his missionary travels, “Very well indeed,” Jogues responded. Only when prompted further did he reveal that Jogues was alive and well and, in fact, he was Fr. Jogues. Humility was his crowning trait. News spread very quickly of his return, and Jogues became something of a celebrity. Pope Urban VIII called Jogues a martyr, a term traditionally reserved for those who had died. Ladies, courtiers, and even the queen of France desired to meet this living saint and do him homage by kissing his mutilated hands which he humbly kept hidden beneath the folds of his cassock. As Jogues regained his strength, he longed only to return to his people and to the missions in the New World.

In May 1646, not even a year after his ransom, Jogues returned to Mohawk territory with layman Jean Lalande to once again attempt at organizing a mission among the Natives there. Their party was

intercepted by the Mohawks, and after withstanding the most heinous tortures, both men were executed; their heads cut off and placed on the palisades, their bodies strewn in the river. However, the gentleness and, above all, bravery that these men displayed in the face of tortures and death, had a profound impact especially among the Mohawk tribes. Jogues and the North American Martyrs paved the way for future relations of peace between the Indians and the French, allowing other notable explorers and missionaries, like Louis Jolliet and Father Jacques Marquette, to advance in their work of exploration and evangelization without having to suffer martyrdom. Ten years after the death of St. Isaac Jogues and St. Jean Lalande at Ossernenon, this village became the birthplace of Tekakwitha, a young Mohawk woman of outstanding virtue who would become St. Kateri Tekakwitha, the Lily of the Mohawks and the first canonized Native American of the Catholic Church. These missionary martyrs not only taught the Gospel, they lived it: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit” (John 12:24).

Each Sunday we profess our belief in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints, but what does this mean: The Communion of Saints? These are not just words which we speak, but a reality in which we participate. Maybe you too are moved with admiration at the story of the Jesuit martyrs, as I am. However, when I visited the Shrine of the North American martyrs, I experienced something even deeper than

admiration. It was as though I walked the path *with* Isaac Jogues and Rene Goupil. I experienced their presence and companionship, a kinship with the saints. In one word: communion.

The Church teaches us that “it is not merely by the title of example that we cherish the memory of those in heaven...our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain and head issues all grace, and the life of the people of God itself” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 957). Isaac Jogues, Rene Goupil, Jean Lalande, the Jesuit martyrs, and all the saints, are alive today. In fact, they are even more alive than they were on earth since they now share in the eternal life of God in Heaven. They are bound to Christ, and we, as members of Christ’s body, are bound to our brothers and sisters the saints. In the life of faith, we are not alone! We belong to a family; a universal family that breaks the barriers of time and space, and spans many cultures and millennia, and even through the cosmos into eternity. The Church celebrates this reality and invites us to rejoice with our brothers and sisters the saints every year on November 1st, the Solemnity of All Saints. In these great feast days ahead, may God open our eyes to our communion with the saints, and grant us the grace of deeper faith, unwavering hope, and ardent love for God and our neighbor that we may one day enter their company one day in Heaven!



Sarah is an intern at Nativity house and Director of Religious Education for Saint Jude Parish in Joliet IL.



THE VISITATION

Nativity House
17141 W. 143rd St.
Lockport, IL 60441



In this issue:

*Combatting Climate Change with
the Power of Community
All Things in Common
World Youth Day
Invitation Feminists for Life
The Only Adequate Response*

Living Communion: The Story of Issac Jogues and the North American Martyrs

by Sarah Reznicek

On October 19th, the Church commemorates the martyrdom of the North American saints Isaac Jogues and his companions, brave men who gave it all to witness to the love of Christ: "Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down one's life for one's friend" (John 15:13). Last year, I had the great privilege of visiting the shrine of the North American Martyrs in Auriesville, New York. Truly, this place is a heavenly haven, a meeting place between Heaven and Earth, and I treasure the time I spent there because it made the reality of our Catholic belief in the communion of saints come alive.

The rugged bravery and heroism of these missionaries is so incredible, that they can almost seem like men of myth. Indeed, their strength was of a supernatural origin, beyond any human capacity. It was the love of God alone that empowered them to persevere in the face of trials and even death. Setting out to the "New World," these missionaries were well aware of what awaited them:

unchartered and dangerous wilderness, epidemics and disease, the difficulties of learning a new language and communicating with people of a radically different culture. They also knew they may have to pay the ultimate price of their own life.

Known as the "Apostle of the Mohawks," St. Isaac Jogues spent 6 years of missionary work among the Huron Indians and on an expedition was captured by the Mohawks, an enemy tribe of the Huron. Having the opportunity to escape, but seeing that his younger companion, Rene Goupil, had been captured, Jogues gave himself up. The two men were taken as prisoners, forced to watch their Huron friends and companions be burned at the stake and themselves made to run "the gauntlet", enduring clubs, sticks, knives, and brutal tortures from every angle. Though their bodies were severely weakened from the tortures, they never ceased proclaiming God's love and mercy. Goupil was eventually tomahawked in the

head by a Mohawk who witnessed him making the sign of the cross over a Native Indian girl. He proclaimed the Lord even with his dying breath repeating over and over the name of Jesus.

In the months following, St. Isaac was subject to all types of mistreatment and tortures; privation of food, exposure to the elements, his nails were torn out, his two fingers were crushed by the bites of the Natives, and one of his thumbs was sawed off. Jogues sought and praised God still, saying his prayers beneath a cross carved into a tree. Rather than wallow in self-pity, Jogues comforted and cared for the Huron Indians taken prisoner. It is recorded that he baptized 70 people during the year of his captivity. At last helped to escape by the Dutch colonists nearby, Isaac obtained passage back to Europe. When the Mohawks pursued him, Jogues was again willing to give himself up and suffer torture and even death, if it meant that no other life would be



taken on his account. St. Isaac was ransomed and allowed to go freely. Even the Mohawks admired the courage of this man whom they called Ondessonk, "the Indomitable One".

Upon his arrival back to France, still ragged from his long journey, Jogues went immediately to the home of the Jesuit rector who hardly recognized him. When the rector asked Jogues if he knew of the priest Fr. Isaac Jogues

...continued on page 7