

## **Reflections from Shane MacCarthy on the Summer 2015 Intentional Eucharistic Communities Meeting in St Paul Minnesota**

On Thursday evening for those IEC participants who arrived a day early for the weekend event (June 26-28) there was a remarkable Concert for the Homeless led by three of our very favorite liturgical song writers, Marty Haugen (“All Are Welcome”), David Haas (“We Are Called”), and Jan Michael Jonas (“On Eagle’s Wings”). Remarkably, and by fortuitous coincidence, all three of these men live and work in the Minneapolis/St. Paul Area. For two and a half hours in a suburban church filled with nearly 1,000 people, we learned about the stories behind the songs, and then together, we raised our voices in joyous praise!

The Gathering, starting the next evening (Friday), continued the high spirits, with insightful reflections and dialogue by three outstanding speakers whose presentations keynoted each day of the weekend. Jamie Manson, a columnist for the NCR and a Yale Divinity School graduate discussed the omnipresence of sacramentality in the world and God’s presence to us and through us, especially as seen in the marginalized – note Pope Francis’ emphasis – and as specifically referenced in the Latin American Bishops’ “preferential option for the poor.” She reminded us of the Baltimore Catechism’s emphasis that “God is everywhere” and that all faithful are “infused with the sacramental power” of bringing God’s presence into the world.

Saturday morning, Roger Haight, S.J., a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, addressed the Gathering, providing his insight on “How the Eucharist fits into our everyday spirituality and life.” (See image 201.) Roger asked the question whether Jesus, at the Last Supper, when He spoke what we currently describe as the “words of consecration” was actually looking around the table where He saw men AND women, and

addressing them said in effect, “this/you are my body; this/you are my blood”...and commissioned this group as an extension of Himself to go forth and celebrate the Good News. While not judging the validity of what we understand as the concept of “consubstantiation”, Roger suggested there is an evolving thinking of that doctrine because “the Church can never lack the power to do what it has to do”...with the underlying belief that the “real presence of God is in the community” and perhaps we should revisit the traditional concept of the Mystical Body of Christ in the light of this renewed understanding. Roger encouraged us not to be handcuffed and locked into old paradigms.

Sister Miriam Therese Winter is a remarkable 86-year-old Medical Mission Sister who is the Director of the Women’s Leadership Institute at the Hartford Seminary while serving as its Professor of Liturgy, Worship, Spirituality and Feminist Studies. She’s a songwriter as well (“Joy is Like the Rain”). Miriam’s presentation on Sunday morning served as the perfect summarization of a weekend and prelude to the closing Eucharistic Liturgy that demonstrated and played out the wished-for Church of engaged men AND women. The Liturgy was led by a Prayer Leader and several Readers, including yours truly, who led the gathering in a communal recitation of a Canon drafted by the host organization, the Spirit of St. Stephen’s Catholic Community. (See images 2224 & 2222.) The Liturgy itself was organized by the Des Moines, Iowa, Intentional Eucharistic Community.

Some afterthoughts on the IEC Gathering experience:

- The hosting IEC, the Spirit of St. Stephen’s Catholic Community, is a truly unique and dedicated group of women and men who gather each Sunday, about 200 in number, and celebrate the liturgy following the Roman Catholic seasons of the
-

liturgical year, lectionary, order of the liturgy, and social teaching. They clearly and comfortably state that in 2008 “when faced with new requirements from the archdiocese, we separated from the Roman Catholic Church and became an independent community.

- In 2001, Sonja Donohue from NOVA and I served as the co-chairs of the Liturgical Committee for the IEC Gathering that took place at the 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Sonja and I again were requested to act as the Liturgical Committee co-chairs for the 2009 Gathering that was again hosted by the Greater Washington Area IECs at the 4-H Center. Being responsible for the organizational aspects of the culminating event – a Liturgy - of an Intentional EUCHARISTIC Committee Gathering, provides one with a sense of the sacramental culture of the participating IECs. In 2001 and 2009 there was a clear prevailing commitment to having an ordained Roman Catholic priest IN GOOD STANDING preside over the closing Liturgy. Last weekend in St. Paul there was almost an unanimous – with the exception of at least two of 40 communities, PAX being one of them – acceptance and belief that Jesus becomes present in and through the engaged gathering of baptized faithful and the invocation of a concelebrated prayer under the leadership of designated Readers and a Prayer Leader, who is not necessarily an ordained RC priest. This represents a distinct shift in thinking about the very element, the Eucharist, that brings these communities together as IECs.

- No surprise, among the IEC members there is a tremendous reservoir of love and affection for Pope Francis. A continuing issue in which Pope Francis seems blindsided is the requirement for complete equity involving the role of men AND women in the Church. When the Church thoughtfully and respectfully addresses this injustice through doctrinal teaching, the IECs perceive a sea change for good in the RC family.

All of the 30-plus presentations, including the three keynote talks, were videotaped and soon will be available over the internet. I will keep you apprised as to when this occurs.