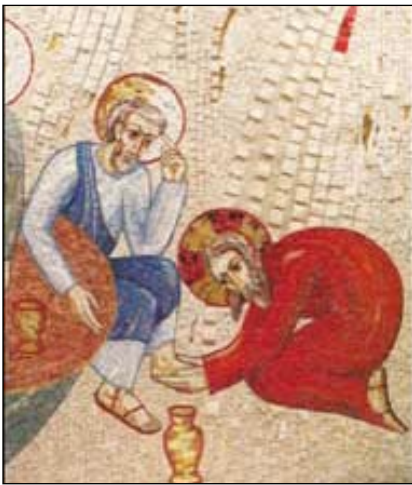


Dear Friends,

For some time, I have wanted to find a way to keep in touch more frequently with friends around the world. It seems that an occasional "e letter" might be an ideal way of doing this. Entitled **News from the Lay Centre**, the goal of this "e letter" is to update you on current happenings here at the Lay Centre and alert you to upcoming programs.

A few weeks ago, I visited the "Redemptoris Mater" Chapel, located just near the Papal apartments in the Vatican, with some students from the Gregorian and the Lay Centre. (Catherine Stevenson, MD, who lived at the Lay Centre eleven years ago and who is now a psychiatrist in Houston, Texas, was also in Rome and able to join us.)



One of the stupendous scenes in this chapel is the mosaic of Jesus bending down to wash the feet of Peter. It is a reminder of Jesus' humility and his invitation to follow his example. As Pope Benedict XVI wrote, when meditating on the liturgy of Holy Thursday, "when the Lord of the world comes and undertakes the slave's task of foot washing - which is an illustration of the way he washes our feet all through our lives - we have a totally different picture.

God doesn't want to trample on us, but kneels down before us to exalt us. The mystery of the greatness of God is seen precisely in the fact that he can be small. Only when power is changed from the inside, and we accept Jesus and his way of life, whose whole self is there in the action of foot washing - only then can the world be healed and people be able to live at peace with one another."

Supporting the Lay Centre.

As many people ask how they can support the Lay Centre, the Board of Directors decided we should make it possible for our friends to support us with an on-line gift by clicking on the following site

<http://www.laycentre.org/support.htm>

Wishing you all a blessed Easter. May the blessings of the Risen Lord fill you with peace and joy. Donna Orsuto.

Focusing on Formation

As part of a year long effort focused intensely on lay formation (a theme featured in both our past and upcoming newsletter), the Lay Centre organized and hosted a consultation on "The Integral Formation of Lay Students in Rome" that welcomed representatives from the various pontifical universities in Rome. Archbishop Michael Miller, Secretary, of the Congregation for Catholic Education, gave the main address at the consultation that was published in the March 9, 2006 issue of *Origins*.

During his address, Archbishop Miller stated that lay formation is "more than merely professional schooling or job training. It is the shaping of the whole human person and it includes the harmonious integration of every aspect of Christian life."

He further noted that for those preparing for lay ecclesial ministry, living in community is not only helpful, it is essential. "A faith community, usually rather small, provides an opportunity for support, example, accountability, feedback, affirmation and critique as well as for living the church's liturgy."



The 2006 Annual Washington Benefit Evening

For those of you who live in the Washington, D.C. area, I wanted to let you know that I will be coming into town for the annual fundraising event organized by the Friends of the Lay Centre. We invite you to join this program with a group from Holy Trinity Parish in Washington DC accompanied by Fr. James Greenfield, OSFS.

Here is the information about what is planned:

The evening will begin with the Celebration of the Eucharist (6:00 pm), 7:00 pm and after the program - reception, a lecture and round table discussion (7:30 pm), followed by another reception.

The Friends of the Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas

invite you to a Benefit Evening Thursday April 20 2006

Georgetown Visitation, 1524 35th Street, NW, Washington, DC

The guest lecturer will be:

Dr. H. Richard McCord, Director of the U.S. Bishops' Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women, and Youth. A roundtable discussion will follow with the following panel members:
 Dr. Sandra Keating, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Theology, Providence College
 Dr. James Buckley, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, Loyola College in Maryland
 Dr. Michael James, Vice President, Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
 Dr. Donna Orsuto, Director of the Lay Centre, Moderator

\$100 individuals \$150 couples

Checks payable to "Friends of the Lay Centre/NCCF"

may be sent to Ms. Nancy Lindsay, 4101 Cathedral NW, apt. 808, Washington, D.C. 20016. All contributions are tax deductible in the USA.

R.S.V.P. - NELindsay@aol.com US tel.: 202 364-4256

Helping with this event is Jem Sullivan, Ph.D. who recently began assisting the Lay Centre in its marketing efforts. Jem teaches at the Pontifical Faculty of the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, DC. She brings to her work for the Lay Centre a wide range of experiences with Catholic non-profit organizations in the areas of marketing, media, and communications.

Celebrating with the Local Church

The recent consistory with the creation of nineteen new cardinals was a particularly happy occasion for Lay Centre student Africanus L. Diedong because among the Cardinals was **Peter Poreku Dery**, the 87 year old retired archbishop of Tamale, Ghana.



Africanus spent the week with other Ghanaians who came to Rome for the celebration. The Cardinal was born in Africanus' hometown, Nandom-Ko in the Wa Diocese. Cardinal Dery was consecrated by Pope John XXIII in Rome as the first local bishop of that diocese in 1977. This past summer, Cardinal Dery celebrated Africanus' marriage to Justina Zoyah in his private chapel. When talking about his marriage, Africanus said, *"Great things have happened and will continue to happen through the gift of faith in our lives. To God be the glory."* A major hope here at the Lay Centre is to try to help people stay connected with their local church. This picture of Cardinal Peter Preku Dery and Africanus speaks volumes of a realized dream.

This Patrick and Mary Dorgan Memorial Series

Both the VPI Spring Course "Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark," which ran on six consecutive Thursday mornings from February 2 through March 9, and the Annual VPI Lenten Retreat *"Following Jesus: The Transforming Power of the Gospel in Daily Life,"* which was held on the weekend of March 10-12, were generously sponsored by the Patrick and Mary Dorgan Memorial Fund.

The course and the retreat were both presented by popular teacher and spiritual director Rev. Anthony McSweeney, SSS, the former Superior General of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers and the current Director of the Center Eucharistia here in Rome. The retreat was once again held at the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament outside Castel Madama. Patrick and Mary Dorgan were immigrants to the United States from County Kerry, Ireland. Having settled in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, they raised a family of 14 children. Patrick was a surveyor for a lumber company. They were active members of St. Patrick's Church and are both buried in the parish cemetery.

This fund was established by the retired U.S. Ambassador Jean Wilkowski in loving memory of her grandparents for the faith that they passed on to her family. Ambassador Wilkowski spent many years in the foreign service for the United States. She served in the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and Africa. She also spent time working at the United Nations in New York. She is a member of the board of St. Mary of the Woods College in Indiana and Barry University in Florida. She holds six honorary doctorates, including one from the University of Notre Dame. Having served in Rome, Italy on two different assignments, she is a frequent visitor to the Eternal City and a friend of the Lay Centre.

A faith that does justice: The Honorable Tony P. Hall

One of the participant's in this year's VPI Lenten Retreat was Ambassador Tony P. Hall. A few weeks before the weekend retreat, Ambassador Hall came to the Lay Centre to give the lecture at one of our monthly Sunday formation evenings for the laity.

To a packed audience of young students, diplomats, and other friends, Ambassador Hall, who was nominated for the Nobel Prize, spoke movingly of his commitment to alleviate poverty. He challenged his listeners to recognize that each person has a responsibility to do his or her part to work for justice.

Ambassador Hall and his wife Janet have been faithful friends of the Lay Centre and continue to serve on the Lay Centre Honorary Board. We will really miss the Hall's who left Rome on April 5th, but we look forward to seeing them in the USA and on their future visits here.



(Left: Ambassador Hall with Prof. Deborah Lipstadt of Emory University and a visiting professor this spring at the Pontifical Gregorian University; Right: participants at Ambassador Hall's lecture).

Upcoming Spring and Summer Programs in Rome.

Refer to our website for more details.

21-26 May 2006 - Saints in Rome

A course by Prof. Lawrence Cunningham, the John A. O'Brien Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, which will introduce participants to the lives and time of the saints who have lived in Rome over the centuries. Learn the stories of the martyrs, the struggles of the monastics, and the worldly holiness of the modern models of Christian living.

2-7 July, 2006 - Jesus & Other Religions

What does it mean that Christians see Jesus as the universal saviour? What is the role of other religions in God's plan of redemption? The course will examine and discuss the Roman Catholic Church's attitude toward other religions and look at various different Christian perspectives.

9-14 July 2006 - And so we came to Rome

Roman Christians in the First Three Centuries. Look at the early history of Christians in Rome. What was their prayer practice like? Their connection with the Jewish community in Rome? How did leadership evolve in Rome during this time? Visit the places where these first Christians lived and where they buried their dead. Learn how doctrine developed during this time.

16-21 July 2006 - Praying in Rome

From the Martyrs to St. Ignatius Loyola: History, Architecture, Spirituality. Investigate the development of patterns of prayer in Christianity by looking at Roman prayer through the ages. Fr. James Greenfield, OSFS will be participating in this program with a group from Washington DC. We invite you to join them.

24-30 September 2006 - Women at the Well

Throughout the centuries, women have made a particular contribution to the building up of the Church, especially during times of crisis. During this study week with Dr. Donna Orsuto, we will dialogue with some of these women, learn who they were, how they served the Church of their time, and how they challenge us as Christians today. Learn about the martyrs Felicity and Perpetua, Agnes and Cecilia, the medieval women Clare of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, and Bridget of Sweden, and the modern Teresa of Avila. See how women today are contributing to shape the church of tomorrow.