

**OFFICE FOR ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS  
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA**



**NEWSLETTER FOR PARISH ECUMENICAL REPRESENTATIVES**  
**May, 2008**

As many of you already know from the *Catholic Standard and Times*, I have been appointed to the service of the Holy See as an official in the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Rome), effective June 1. My main area of responsibility will be with Christians of the Reformed Tradition (Calvinists) and the Anabaptists. I have mixed feelings as I begin this new ministry. I look forward to continuing my work in ecumenism, but I will miss my home, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. As director of this office for the past three years, I am grateful for the work you do as Parish Ecumenical Representatives to further the essential work of promoting unity and understanding among all people of faith. Keep up the good work!

Cardinal Rigali has appointed Monsignor Michael Carroll as the new director of the office, effective June 16, 2008. Msgr. Carroll comes to this ministry especially with experience in Catholic – Jewish Relations. Please join with me in welcoming him to the Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs office, and please pray for him as he begins this important work.

Each year the Catholic Association of Ecumenical and Interreligious Diocesan Officers (CADEIO) awards one person its highest recognition of service for ecumenism. Sr. Josephine Kase, Assistant Director, Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, was awarded the James Fitzgerald Award for Ecumenism at this year's annual National Workshop on Christian Unity (April 14-17, 2008). We are all very proud and grateful for all Sr. Josephine's work in furthering ecumenical and interreligious understanding.

A final special thank you to the six regional vicariate coordinators: Deacon John Golaszewski, Deacon Charles Polley, Deacon Daniel DeLucca, Deacon Joseph Lonergan, Deacon Clifford Brown and Deacon James Stewart for all the leadership and support they have given me these past three years. I know and trust that the work of fostering understanding and unity will continue here in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia through their leadership and guidance.

Please pray for me as I move to Rome and transition in this new position. May God continue to bless you all, and may the good work begun in you continue to bear fruit.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Fr. Gregory J. Fairbanks*

## THE PAPAL VISIT

Before arriving in the United States, Pope Benedict XVI sent a letter to the people of our country which included the following:

The intention behind my visit . . . is to reach out spiritually to all Catholics in the United States. At the same time, I earnestly hope that my presence among you will be seen as a fraternal gesture towards every ecclesial community, and a sign of friendship for members of other religious traditions and all men and women of good will.

### Excerpts from Pope Benedict's Talks

#### *1. To Representatives of Other Religions*

The transmission of religious traditions to succeeding generations not only helps to preserve a heritage; it also sustains and nourishes the surrounding culture in the present day. The same holds true for dialogue between religions; both the participants and society are enriched. As we grow in understanding of one another, we see that we share an esteem for ethical values, discernable to human reason, which are revered by all people of goodwill. The world begs for a common witness to these values. I therefore invite all religious people to view dialogue not only as a means of enhancing mutual understanding, but also as a way of serving society at large. By bearing witness to those moral truths which they hold in common with all men and women of goodwill, religious groups will exert a positive influence on the wider culture, and inspire neighbors, co-workers and fellow citizens to join in the task of strengthening the ties of solidarity. . . .

Let our sincere dialogue and cooperation inspire all people to ponder the deeper questions of their origin and destiny. May the followers of all religions stand together in defending and promoting life and religious freedom everywhere. By giving ourselves generously to this sacred task – through dialogue and countless small acts of love, understanding and compassion – we can be instruments of peace for the whole human family.

#### *2. To the Jewish Community on the Feast of Pesah (Passover)*

Our Easter and your Pesah, while distinct and different, unite us in our common hope centered in God and his mercy. They urge us to cooperate with each other and with all men and women of goodwill to make this a better world for all as we await the fulfillment of God's promises.

With respect and friendship, I therefore ask the Jewish community to accept my Pesah greeting in a spirit of openness to the real possibilities of cooperation which we see before us as we contemplate the urgent needs of our world, and as we look with compassion upon the sufferings of millions of our brothers and sisters everywhere. Naturally, our shared hope for peace in the world embraces the Middle East and the Holy Land in particular. May the memory of God's mercies, which Jews and Christians celebrate at this festive time, inspire all those responsible for the future of that region – where events surrounding God's revelation actually took place – to new efforts, and especially to new attitudes and a new purification of hearts!

3. *To the Representatives of Other Christian Communities*

Only by “holding fast” to sound teaching will we be able to respond to the challenges that confront us in an evolving world. Only in this way will we give unambiguous testimony to the truth of the Gospel and its moral teaching. This is the message which the world is waiting to hear from us. Like the early Christians, we have a responsibility to give transparent witness to the “reasons for our hope,” so that the eyes of all men and women of goodwill may be opened to see that God has shown us his face, and granted us access to his divine life through Jesus Christ. He alone is our hope! God has revealed his love for all peoples through the mystery of his Son’s passion and death, and has called us to proclaim that he is indeed risen, has taken his place at the right hand of the Father, and “will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead” (Nicene Creed).

\*\*\*\*\*

*From the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*

MESSAGE TO BUDDHISTS FOR THE FEAST OF VESAKH 2008

It gives me much joy to recall the positive relationships that Catholics and Buddhists have enjoyed for many years. I am confident that this foundation will serve to strengthen and deepen our understanding of each other as we continue to work together to build a better world not only for ourselves but also for the entire human family. Experience teaches us that dialogue fosters the desire within the person and the community to share the goodwill and harmony which already exists, and indeed to reach out ever more courageously to others, ready to embrace the challenges and difficulties that may arise.

. . . . Christianity and Buddhism have always upheld a great respect for nature and taught that we should be grateful stewards of the earth. Indeed it is only through a profound reflection on the relationship between the divine Creator, creation and creatures that attempts to address environmental concerns will not be marred by individual greed or hampered by the interests of individual groups.

On a practical level can we Christians and Buddhists not do more to collaborate in projects which confirm the responsibility that falls to each and every one of us? Recycling, energy conservation, the prevention of indiscriminate destruction of plant and animal life, and the protection of waterways all speak of careful stewardship and indeed foster goodwill and promote cordial relations among peoples. In this way Christians and Buddhists together can be harbingers of hope for a clean, safe and harmonious world.

*Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran, President  
Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*

**COMING EVENTS**

***The Dignity of Religious Difference:  
How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations***

A conversation with Rabbi Jonathan Sacks  
Chief Rabbi of England and the British Commonwealth

Tuesday, May 20, 12:15 to 2:00 PM  
Jewish Community Services Building  
2100 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103

Lunch will be served

Please RSVP to Dolores Long at 215-568-2223 or by e-mail at [dlong@adl.org](mailto:dlong@adl.org)

\* \* \* \* \*

**Encountering Other Faiths**

This is an introductory seminar for faith communities/parishes desiring to explore interreligious dialogue and engagement. Plans are underway to initiate this program in two locations in the Fall:

Our Lady of Hope Parish will host the program for interested parishes in Cluster 19 on Tuesdays from August 26 through October 7 from 7:00 to 8:30 PM.

St. Isaac Jogues Parish will host the program for interested parishes in Cluster 53 on Saturdays from September 13 through October 18. The projected time is 10:00 AM till noon.

**ACTIVITIES OF OFFICE STAFF**

April 29 - Father Fairbanks and Sister Josephine attended the semi-annual meeting of the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia.

April 30 - Father Fairbanks gave a talk on Islam at St. Alphonsus Parish in Maple Glen.

May 4 - Sister Josephine participated in the annual Holocaust Memorial Ceremony at Congregation Rodeph Shalom.

May 6 - Our office hosted a delegation of nine visitors from nine different African countries, a project coordinated by the International Visitors Council and the U.S. State Department. Discussion focused on how our office works to create a climate of greater interfaith understanding and respect within our community.