

NACAR



North American Conference
of Associates and Religious

The Associate

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HOPE
endures



Message from NACAR

MISSION

The North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR) is a membership organization that acts as a catalyst to serve, empower and promote the associate-religious relationship.

VISION STATEMENT

A vibrant, viable organization that collaborates with regional partners to promote association in all its forms.

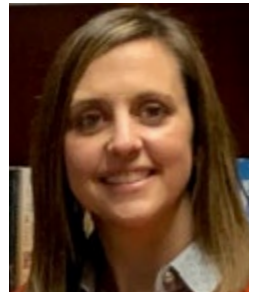
Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

We come to this issue with transition and change in our hearts. As many of you know, the next issue of *The Associate* will be our final issue. Anytime we are at the precipice of change, it can stir anxiety in us. We are experiencing anxiety of the unknown and uncertainty of what the future will hold. I am coming to prayer with anxiety in my heart about the future and also gratitude for my time with NACAR.

My desire as we approach our final issue is to greet it with thankful hearts for what we have witnessed over the past 25 years in the associate movement and NACAR. I also have gratitude for the thoughtful reflections and book review in this issue. I hope you enjoy these insightful pieces and I look forward to celebrating NACAR and the associate movement in our next issue.

Associate Carla Rush,
Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati,
editor of The Associate



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Looking Forward to New Beginnings

by Kathy Noether, associate of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and co-director of BACAR

New beginnings have been on all of our minds as we ushered in 2021! We have had great hopes for this year, in particular, after so much heartache, loss, political unrest and waiting. We found this to be the perfect theme for BACAR (Bay Area Conference of Associates and Religious) to come together and share ideas and thoughts of what lies ahead for each of us. This particular forum was more meditative prayer than collective dialog, and yet we did bring our reflections together in breakout rooms so that each of us could say what was on our minds. With the theme of “New Beginnings,” we broke this down into four parts to include: beginnings, selfhood, attachments and hope, and friendship.

Beginnings can occur with a death of a loved one, a move to a new city, a new job, a new child, or any other life event. What new beginning am I experiencing now? How am I feeling at this point? One response was, “As I watch the early budding on a tree outside my window, I see it representing the new life and a new path closer to God. I am called to be a better person at this age, and reach more people and be better, be more effective.”

Selfhood allowed us to think of when we are in a new situation, at the beginning of a new year, or in a new state of mind that it is natural to make resolutions. In those resolutions are we staying true to ourselves or trying to be someone different? When Jesus offers someone a new beginning, he is simply calling them to be their best selves. Can I claim my selfhood, my own identity, loved and given by God? One response was, “Letting go is a big ask at this time for me. With two recent deaths in my family, I am living with sadness. I am asking where is the joy hiding in my life? So, I am being challenged to reach out for the ‘wow’ in every day!”

Attachments and hope brought to mind that sometimes new beginnings are chances to take a look at the things we’re holding onto. Saint Ignatius speaks of “disordered attachments,” things we’re attached to that are not helpful to growing closer to God and our true self. We need to get rid of those things. What can I get rid of at this point in my life; what things are unhelpful to my journey? At this new beginning, what are my hopes? Several friends shared that communities of love and care help to heal wounds. Others were aware of being acutely vulnerable while entering into their own woundedness but finding strength there.

Our last target area included friendships, which may help us in our transition or encourage us to awaken dreams. It’s also important to consider our friendship with God who meets us wherever we are. When we look back on the past, we may nostalgically long to return to that place. But the graces of those times and the memories of the past can come with us. God moves with us from the present moment into the future, into new and hopeful beginnings. So our final question was, who are my friends who can help me in my journey forward? From our participants’ responses we felt that we are all learning to live with uncertainty, and at the same time being part of the change; the majority felt joy, even in the difficult times, and hope, in where they are now.

This Zoom presentation was based on a meditation from Ignatian Spirituality included in Andy Otto’s *God in All Things* and presented by Judy Borland, Marilee Hearn, Rose Lue, Dolores Nice and Kathy Noether.



A Praxis of Justice: A Praxis of Hope

by Associate Ann Gotfryd, *Congrégation De Notre-Dame*
Toronto, Ontario, NACAR board member

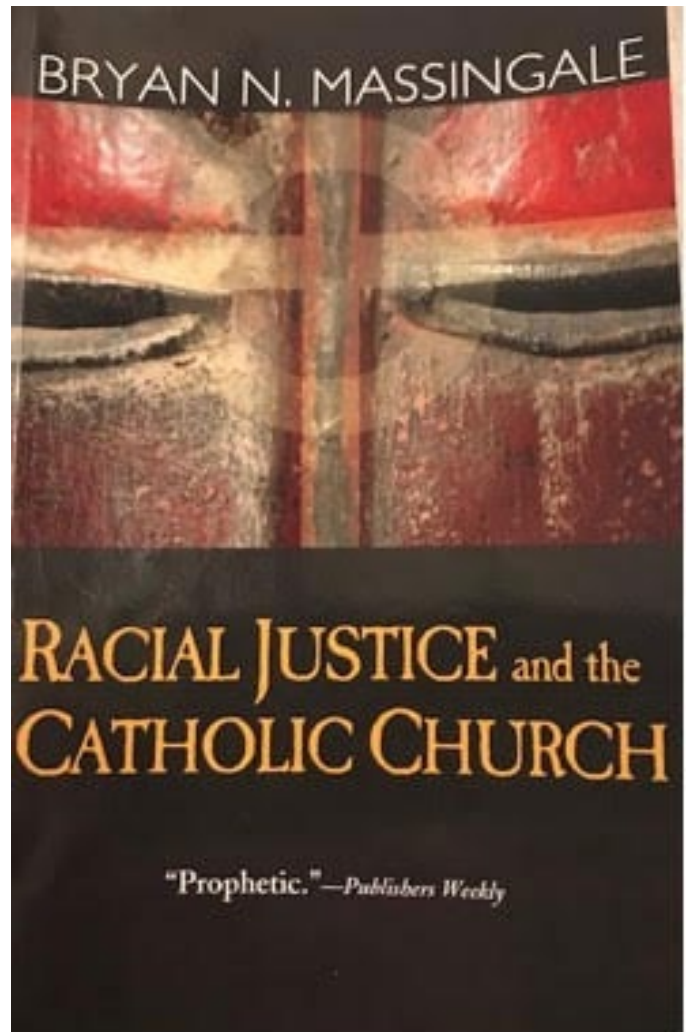
I have just finished reading *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* by Bryan N. Massingale, and feel compelled to write. I feel the urge to explore the personal impact of the challenges and the assurances offered by this book.

I started reading with the objective curiosity of a white, British-born Canadian. From the beginning, I appreciated the very clear and concise explanation of terms. Written in 2010, the first chapter offered me a solid grounding in the historical context and social reality of racism in the United States. At the end of Chapter 1, Massingale summarizes: “Racism at its core is a set of meanings and values that inform the American way of life.” He suggests that these cultural assumptions, beliefs and convictions justify the existence of a kinder, gentler “racism that advocates interpersonal decency, kindness, and respect for all, while it yet protects white systemic advantage and benefit.” He concludes that ethical reflection on racism, particularly U.S. Catholic ethical reflection, must “adopt a structural and systemic approach to this social evil which is in fact a cultural phenomenon.”

If I was going to remain open to his continued analysis, I realized that this definition of racism as “a culture of white advantage, privilege and dominance “ would challenge me to look more closely at myself, my cultural heritage and the Canadian context.

And yet I was able to keep an intellectual distance throughout Chapter 2 as Massingale moved into his exploration of Catholic social teaching on racism. Again, the U.S. context allowed me to separate myself from the realities he was exposing, although I was moved to think

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Racial Justice and the Catholic Church

by Brian N Massingale
Orbis Books, New York; 2010
ISBN 978-1-57075-776-1



A Praxis of Justice

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about what I know about statements made by my Canadian bishops. But in actual fact, I was not yet fully engaged. However, that changed with Chapter 3.

Entitled “Toward a More Adequate Catholic Engagement,” it is in this section that Massingale asks:

- How do church and society get beyond their cultural captivity to white privilege?
- What alternative set of meanings and values — what counter identity — are mediated by Catholic Christian faith and its system of cultural symbols?

Now I had no excuse not to pay attention. Now I was being called into active, heart-felt participation in this enterprise. It is in Chapter 3 that Massingale invites his reader to ponder issues such as forgiveness and reconciliation; the effort required to overcome entrenched racial antipathies and injustices; the legacy of suspicion, mistrust, fear and hatred that we have inherited; and the contribution that our faith can make to a new beginning.

In his discussion of the power of the language of lament, Massingale opened up the space for my privileged voice to be join with those who are suffering. He called me back to my scriptural roots as he explored the power of compassion that “moves the will to justice” and “gives rise to solidarity.” He assured me that my Christian faith can help facilitate the development of authentic racial identity, as he considered three church practices that support identity formation: conversion, baptism and the celebration of the Eucharist. By the end of this chapter, I was alive with possibility and hope. Now more aware of a new path, one of faith, intentionality, personal

meaning and group identity, Massingale had provided me with language and resources to help me face the challenge of working for racial justice from a position of privileged advantage.

The last two sections, “Meditations on African-American Understandings of Justice and Hope” and “The Vocation of the Black Theologian and the Struggle of the Black Catholic Community,” ground the earlier material in personal narrative, music and poetry. Massingale’s epilogue ends: “What is now does not have to be. Therein lies the hope. And the challenge.”

With extensive notes, an excellent index and an annotated section offering resources for further reading and understanding, Massingale’s book has allowed me to not only engage with and reflect upon a complex issue, but it has also called me into personal spiritual growth and expanded community exploration. If you get the chance to read this book, it is a journey worth taking.



Listen, Can You Hear It?

The Buoy Bell Chimes

Written by Associate Marybeth Irvine, Dominican Associate of Peace, to honor the continued presence and challenge of Colette Parker, our first Black director of Dominican Associates of Peace, who died suddenly on November 28, 2020.

Listen, can you hear it? No, try again; become stiller; drop further into silence. Surely now you can hear the buoy bell as it chimes outside my window. Why is hearing it important? For me, it has been associated with Colette Parker's voice in the months since her death. The buoy bell is both peaceful and melodic and an indicator that a person is safely close to harbor (home).

My bell has been making its presence heard a lot this past month. It has been calling me to listen to the journey she partnered with me on, a journey that helped move me from a place of wondering, "how did I not know?" to accepting I could not have known because the past history of Blacks in the United States had been locked behind doors to which only a few possessed keys. But then what was I to do since I now had eyes to see? I was to listen openly, to listen willingly, to listen believing there was truth to be heard.

I listened through the discussions of my Dominican study group as we processed the information in the congregation's study packet on racial justice, so I thought I had done the work. Not so, says Colette, there is more listening to do. I again moved to study and leisure reading but only works written by and about people of color. I heard the pain of injustice, the daily fears, the struggle for existence, the inequities. I moved out of my comfort zone to attend events in support of Breonna Taylor. I watched webinars and documentaries. I had conversations about blackness in Louisville with my hairdresser. Surely, I had done the work that Colette challenged me to do. But not so, the bell kept ringing, asking me to listen beyond the knowledge and limited interactions.

What was the more I needed to listen to? Strangely, the more was with me every day. To understand the pain and suffering, I needed to walk in the shoes of the other. Now clearly I could not be Black and inhabit skin the was not mine, but I could listen to my body's responses.

The listening asked me to recall the inner terror I experienced when the bus I was on in Tanzania was stopped by a military-looking guy with his gun clearly in view. To hear inside myself the fear as a shouting match took place in a language I did not understand. After all, haven't we all read of kidnappings of foreigners? I had to listen again to my own body's response as I heard George Floyd's cry: I can't breathe. I had that experience in my dentist's office; I remember the terror that filled my being. And last week, as I listened to a presentation by the director of Roots 101 (a new museum of black history in Louisville), he dropped a set of shackles. My body trembled just hearing the sound.

So what I hear Colette teaching me is my own body gives me insight into the Black experience. An experience that a body of color lives every minute of every day and everywhere. My experiences were all time-limited, brief and mostly in safe places, yet I felt the trauma. How does one's body heal from that kind of trauma when it is relentless? Maybe what I am hearing Colette invite me to is more listening to the responses in my own body when I am in places of discomfort and then listening with compassion to those who know of no other way to live. They are always coping with the generational trauma as well as the daily ones.

So my invitation to each of us is to listen not only to the words outside but to turn inside and listen there as well. That is the gift contemplation nurtures. Contemplate and share with others the fruits of that listening.

NACAR Upcoming Events

May 18- May 20

Charism Carriers: Embracing the Call to Leadership

Religious life and the associate life are in the midst of radical shift and transformation. This retreat is an opportunity for associate leaders and congregational leaders to recognize current realities and to engage in spiritually discerning a shared future. Associate leaders are interested in shaping the future of associate life by creating new ways to integrate and carry forth individual charisms. This retreat will provide time to deepen one's personal sense of the call to leadership and to share approaches for inviting other associates to leadership.

This online experience will flow between prayer, presentation, personal reflection, reflection in small groups, back to large group and prayer.

To register for the retreat, go to our website, <https://nacar.org/event-4148429>. Cost is \$75 for NACAR members and \$100 for non-NACAR members.

June 30, 2021

Final issue of *The Associate*

