

SOCIETY OF HELPERS

VOICES of Hope



The Intersection of
Politics and Religion

BRINGING HOPE TO THE HUMAN JOURNEY

Vol IX Issue I

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Letter from the Editor

As Americans, we often share an expectation that we have the power to direct and orient the choices and decisions our government makes on our behalf. If we are concerned about an election we will read the papers, listen to candidates, try to listen to opposing arguments, then make up our minds which candidate will act most in agreement with our needs, desires and concerns. We often want someone in public office who will reflect our more personal convictions and values. We have come to expect a government that is going to provide for our needs, keep us safe, promote our economy and choose for the common good, as we perceive it. We have also learned as Americans that we cannot have it the way we would like it to be all of the time. We have experienced wars, depressions, recessions, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks when our governments have appeared powerless to provide what we need as well as protect those we love. So, in our political lives we have had the experience of both power and powerlessness.

As Americans, sociologists tell us we are a deeply religious people. As individuals, we pray regularly, attend the worship services of our choosing, and try as best we can to lead a moral, ethical life. We teach our young children the difference between right and wrong, and hope that as young adults they have learned how to live their lives with a discerning heart. Our religious, ethical and moral values define some of the deepest and most sacred parts of our identity. They are the core of who we are.

For most of our lives, these two areas run somewhat parallel. We live our faith and practice our religious beliefs, and our governments espouse similar values, though not always to the extent or in the way we would want. Laws are made, interpretations are given, life goes on. We can protest, make our voices heard. Next election we will have the opportunity to vote in someone who can do the job better or, at least, more to our liking.

Yet, our faith life and our political reality can intersect in some of the most painful ways. "These are the times that try men's souls," wrote Thomas Paine on December 23, 1776. Think about that phrase — "souls" — our souls. Indeed, the intersection of political and religious life reaches from the depths of our souls to the ballot box. When political life no longer upholds but actually contradicts our most cherished beliefs and practices, we are challenged in profound ways. It is this ache that resounded so deeply within so many Americans in this last election. That ache is reflected in the articles of our contributors on the following pages.

It is an invitation to each of us to appreciate and respect the monumental confrontation we have lived together as Americans, as religious people, as family members and as neighbors.

Sr. Jean Kielty, SH

Like Politics, all Faith is Local | by Patrick T. Reardon



There is a common phrase in American democracy asserting that "All politics is local." It's most often attributed to Thomas "Tip" O'Neill,

the masterful Massachusetts Democratic Congressman who, from 1977 to 1987, was Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Those four words are a cautionary tale to any politician who, caught up in high-flown ideals or the high status of office, forgets to take care of his or her constituents. In 1979, Chicago Mayor Michael Bilandic learned this to his chagrin. After a January blizzard dumped 35 inches of snow in a two-day period, he failed to clear the city's streets and keep the elevated trains operating in all neighborhoods. The result: Bilandic was voted out of office a month later.

The same is true for belief: "All faith is local."

As with politics, the believer has to have ideals. That means working — on a citywide and statewide and national and international level — for moral policies and programs that benefit everyone, particularly those on the margins of society. It's important to be an activ-

ist for peace and justice by voting in a sober, thoughtful way and by taking part in the political dialogue by communicating with public officials and demonstrating in the streets and in other ways for right causes.

Yet, the reality is that, as an individual, I have very little impact on public officials. It's true that, if I put my citizen's shoulder behind some particular policy and enough other citizens do the same, change can happen. But the result may be different if there are a lot of citizens on the other side also pushing. Beyond that, there are so many details of government, so many layers of decision, that my single citizen's voice has a hard time being heard on very many.

In contrast, I have a great impact on the people with whom I come in contact each day. Here is where it's



easy to see how all faith is local. If I'm snotty and insensitive to my wife, I can really sour her day. I'm not living out my Christian faith, and she pays the price.

I'm not being a very good Christian on the basketball court if I bully the other players and cheat on the out-of-bounds calls. This taints the experience for everyone, even the guys on my team.

I know of a father, who was in a supermarket one day with his two children, a boy about 11 and a girl about 8. They were checking out, and the cashier handed change to the father. He glanced at it and said, "Oh, I think you gave me too much." The cashier looked, and, sure enough, she'd given him an extra five-dollar bill.

It was a simple thing, but it made that cashier's day better, if only that she didn't come up short at the end of her shift. Also, think of those kids. They watched closely as their dad held the change out to the cashier and looked up at him as she took out that five-dollar bill.

More than thirty years ago, when my wife and I were first dating, we went to a talk that Father Dan Berrigan gave at Northwestern University.

During the question-and-answer part at the end, someone stood up and asked what he should do to stop the bad policies of newly elected President Ronald Reagan.

Berrigan, of course, had become an international hero for protesting the involvement of the United States in the Vietnam War and then going to prison for his beliefs. And he told the questioner that it was important to do what he could to influence public officials.

But he also said that it was more important to live out his Christian beliefs in his daily life — to live racial justice, to care in simple everyday ways for the environment, to be just in a world that often isn't just, to be honest despite the corruption of others.

That was good advice back then, and it's still good advice today.

Bio: Patrick T. Reardon, who worked as a reporter at the Chicago Tribune for 32 years, is the author of eight books, including Requiem for David, a poetry collection published in February, and Faith Stripped to Its Essence: A Discordant Pilgrimage through Shusaku Endo's 'Silence.'



There is an old adage that states religion and politics are never to be discussed publicly. Apparently even

"back in the day," these two issues were considered too hot for public conversation. If it were true then, one can only imagine how it would be applied now. Positions are entrenched, charges and counter-charges are made, and it appears, to use an adaption of Robert Bork's book title, we are "rushing toward Gomorrah" (not "slouching," as he titled his book).

If civility is to be restored to the public square, what will be required? There are two simple, yet profound mindsets that people of faith (specifically, the Christian faith), need to bring to this discussion. These are not rooted in culture or within party identity. They are not issue-oriented

or policy-specific. They know no party, ethnicity, race, or gender. These two mindsets are: (1) we are created in God's image; and (2) we are created for God's glory.

First, we are created in God's image. We are here together on earth at this unique moment in history. How we believe we arrived here makes all the difference. If, as I tell my students at Kentucky Wesleyan College, we are created in God's image, then that determines everything about how we interact with each other. Within the creation order, there is an inherent dignity, meaning, and purpose. If there is not a Creator, then the treatment of other individuals is left to the personal autonomy of the person determining how to treat others. There is no objective standard, and everyone is left with their own version of "truth." Such an environment would be ripe for

racism, bigotry of every kind, and discrimination against those who we deem "not like us." Here we must remember the words of Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Not only are we created in God's image, but, secondly, we are also created for God's glory.



Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, reminded his listeners that men were to see the good deeds performed, resulting in glory to the Father (Matthew 5:14-16). Paul would later write, "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). There is no sacred/secular distinction in the mind of God. All is to be done for his glory, regardless of status or position. That reminds all of us how important it is that we understand, as Martin Luther did, the idea of vocation. He famously stated that God is milking the cow through the hands of the milkmaid.

What does this have to do with religion and politics? If we are to restore civility to the public discourse, it will come about when we view each other as creations of God. He is the objective standard by which our interactions are to be measured. Therefore, we watch the tone we take, the words we use, the attitude we choose to cultivate, and we take the time to listen. That is hard work in an era of social media and 140-character tweets.

If we are to further restore civility, we must do everything for God's glory. We are not pressing our own agenda. We are kingdom minded citizens aggressively "seek(ing) the welfare of the city where I have sent you...



and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare, you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7). We focus on the glory of God and as we focus on that, we find new ways of bringing peace and prosperity to our city, our nation, our world. Isn't that a goal worth pursuing?

Ron Sharp was born in Louisiana, but he has also lived in Georgia, Tennessee, Arizona, and California. Owensboro KY has been his home since 2009. He has worked in Christian publishing, retail, church ministry, and higher education. He holds a Masters degree in Theological Studies and a Masters degree in Religious Education from Liberty University and he's currently pursuing a Doctor of Educational Ministry at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. He has taught religion courses at Kentucky Wesleyan College since 2014 and has served as advisor to the Sigma Nu Fraternity chapter on campus since 2010. He is married, has one son, and two dogs (a Yorkshire terrier and a chiweenie). He may be followed on Twitter @Rev1Ron and Instagram @RonSharp529. He has recently started a blog - www.fanthefflame.co



Saying that this past election was difficult is an understatement. Many believed that the world would end when

the election was over, no matter who won. However, the day after November 8, 2016 was a quiet day: people went to work, I went to class, a normal day. Although in the back of my mind there was a nagging knowledge of coming change and more turmoil, I felt like a weight had lifted from my shoulders. A decision had been made, and even though it wasn't the outcome I expected or wanted, the tension of not knowing was over.

Now we're living in an age of protest and uncertainty; uncertainty all based on what the President will say next, on what the news will say - whether it's correct or not - and a persistent worry of history repeating itself. However, politics appear to rely heavily upon uncertainty, and that's why I wonder if perhaps only faith can help one from being pulled down by the worry it causes.

Lying in bed on the night of the election, with a good idea of who was going to win, I closed my eyes and prayed. I prayed that everything would be alright. I prayed knowing that whatever happened was God's will, and asked for the strength

to stand up when something was wrong. I prayed for the knowledge of what was wrong, and what was right. And then, with the pressure from a worried heart relieved, I slowly drifted off to sleep.

This isn't the first time I have prayed in this manner, and it won't be the last. It has always been hard for me to discern what God believes is right, and what He believes is wrong. It isn't a matter of a moral compass. I have a conscience that, like most people, I wish I could silence. However, I have always seen the other side of how others think. There is so much gray, and so much that I will never understand that I feel as though I cannot condemn anyone based on my own beliefs. Who am I to tell someone how to live their lives? I believe this reasoning stems from Matthew 7:1, "Judge not that ye be not judged," a verse that has always resonated for me. Sitting in





church or listening to others talk, this verse often crosses my mind. In many situations I hear people say, “If you are a Christian, you have to believe (insert political stance here)” or “If you’re a Christian, then you can’t be (insert a political party).” However, as Christians, living in the faith of Jesus Christ, shouldn’t we live by His example and not judge?

Often I recall the people Jesus surrounded himself with, none of them being religious leaders, or upstanding members of the religious community. Instead, He was surrounded by people who were sinners. He healed those tormented by their own demons, and He treated all, believers and nonbelievers alike, with kindness. This observation has often helped me understand how to treat

others, as well as how to handle political issues and decisions. I simply ask myself, “What Would Jesus Do?”

This philosophy has caused many to question my decisions, my political decisions in particular. Most of my Christian family members see an issue and are immediately on the conservative end of the political spectrum. My brother, when he found out I did not vote conservative on my absentee ballot, questioned how as a Christian I couldn’t vote for those whose policies followed the Bible’s teachings. I answered in length, but it only made him madder and more confused. Simply put, I vote for those who treat people with respect, no matter who or what they are.

In Matthew 7:12, Jesus said, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” This verse is said to be the basis for the well-known “Golden Rule,” which says for people to treat others how they want to be treated. In my mind, as a Christian I should show understanding and kindness, as Jesus did before and after his crucifixion. Therefore, supporting anyone who is willing to treat others badly based on who they are and how they are different directly offends me on a spiritual level and I cannot support it politically.

I know that this goes against the beliefs of many Christians that I know, but I don’t mean to offend anyone. I don’t believe that being tolerant and kind despite differences in beliefs is a sin. We all sin and it’s not our job to condemn others through the government. Instead, when political issues and decisions arise, I think of the people behind them and how I would want to be treated in that situation.

In the 2016 election, I was forced to confront politics head on, something I previously had avoided. I found myself faced with a decision of choosing between two people I heartily disagreed with. So I asked myself, if forced with these odds, what would He do? Do I stand on the side of exploiting fear and hate against certain groups of people?

Or do I choose to show compassion without asking who people are or where they come from, like the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:33-36? I always take the Good Samaritan choice, not based on any political or societal stance, but all in good faith, hoping that what I choose is right and praying for guidance that comes from the heart.

Michaela Priddy is a Senior at Kentucky Wesleyan College, and will be graduating in April 2017 with a Bachelor’s Degree in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing. A Kentuckian in a Missionary Baptist family, Michaela enjoys writing her thoughts and stories down on paper, as well as creating art along the way. This is her first publication in a magazine and hopes to publish more in the future.





As a Catholic physician and retired medical school professor who also formerly taught in a school of public health, societal issues related to health and illness and the provision of medical and health care occupy a prominent place in my everyday religious and political considerations. My background also influences my attitudes toward national, state and local politics primarily, but also helps me assess other social issues such as poverty and the unavailability of health services for the poor and approaches to protect personal health and the provision of preventive health services. Additionally, my concerns about a variety of other issues such as inadequate basic public education, climate change and environmental degradation, arise from my basic commitment to the health of all Americans and people of all nations and to preserve our increasingly threatened natural world.

The just-ended presidential election campaign and today's resultant chaotic national political situation and the political instability in many places in the world, especially in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa, have encouraged me to call on my faith, religious background, and political views and step back to ask myself, "where do we go from here?"

My own approach to considering political and social issues is to begin with some basic "givens." First of all, I accept a basic fundamental: faith in a God who is a continuously creating Supernatural Being. My Catholic Christianity derives from my acceptance of a personal set of institutionalized beliefs and practices founded on Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Teacher. Furthermore, I see Politics as the science and art of influencing and guiding government policy leading to and managing control of government and government programs.

I want to bring up several recent presidential campaign issues that dealt with health and medical care. During the campaign, the political parties engaged in an endless battle (it still goes on today and will continue to an unseen future end point) over "Obamacare" or the Affordable Care Act. One party, if victorious, would repeal it on "day one." The

other party would continue the law and health insurance program. While the impact of the repeal was frequently repeated, there seemed little general concern about the real impact on individuals and families who would lose coverage after repeal. In that instance, I found it difficult to support any platform of the party unconcerned with the loss of health insurance coverage by the needy. Thinking about the problem from a Christian principle of not abandoning the poor, it was difficult to understand how any other person proclaiming to be Christian could possibly vote with the unconcerned party that also rejected the reality of global warming.

From my point of view, to assess most current societal and political issues, one needs to be sufficiently informed of the many dimensions of an issue: e.g. magnitude of the problem, alternative solutions and the political feasibility of various

political approaches. Personally, I find that I must read, ponder possible solutions as well as discuss the issue with other knowledgeable persons of similar and diverse points of view. I find that to gain an understanding of an issue, I must seek information from a number of different sources: e.g. a cosmopolitan newspaper, public radio and public television, reliable magazines, medical journals (when necessary), and even attend non-political lectures, e.g. at the San Francisco World Affairs Council.

Recently, the Pew Research Center for Religion and Public Life reported that nearly two-thirds of recent churchgoers said that clergy spoke out about at least one of the following social or political issues: religious liberty (40%), homosexuality (39%), abortion (29%), immigration (27%), environmental issues (22%) and economic inequality (18%). Obviously, to become adequately informed, a variety of resources can be consulted even though it requires a lot of time and effort to do so.

Returning to the issue of the public's health and the availability of health and medical care to all segments of society, the need to consider various political and religious implications of the problem brought up by a political party, politician or community activist



is a major task. Yet, a responsible Christian (and all others) must be adequately informed to exercise a responsible vote.

At this point I have a “favorite” quote from a recent Pope Francis published sermon: “To be a Christian means to do: to do the will of God—and on the last day—because all of us will have one—that day what will the Lord ask? Will he say, ‘What have you said about me?’ NO. He shall ask us about the things we did.” Our Creator will have little patience for “fake Christians.”

Dr. Joseph Barbaccia is Emeritus Professor of the Department of Family and Community Medicine of the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). He graduated from Stanford University, St Louis University (MI), studied and taught at Tulane University in New Orleans and then moved to UCSF. He currently serves on the boards of the Program for All Inclusive Care of the Elderly (PACE), SF and the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society. He and his wife, Clara, are members of St. Agnes Parish in SF.

Trust, then Act | By Anne Carey



A question that has been tugging at me lately, as a Christian and as a citizen, is this: Where (or in what, or in whom)

do I place my trust? Of course there are stock answers to this query, often spoken in portentous tones, by those deemed to be authorities in their respective arenas of discourse. Sometimes these responses are helpful; more often they are unsatisfying, vague, or just plain wrong. So I continue to ponder.

One might ask, what is trust anyway? What do you mean when you use that word? As I see it, trust is a response to goodness and integrity:

the confidence that the one who is trusted will act on the side of life abundant and flourishing. A trusted person or institution can be relied on to do what has been promised, whose words and actions are consistent, or trust-worthy.

In the scriptures, trust is understood as one of the primary characteristics of the relationship between God and God’s people. As a covenant people, Israel knew that faithfulness required them to keep their side of that covenant, to be God’s people in response to God’s gift of God-self to them. In the divine-human covenant, there is trust in both directions: our trust in God, who

does not fail, and God’s trust in us, who fail regularly. Yet the covenant remains because God is gracious and abounding in steadfast love. Thanks be to God!

If trust is an abiding feature of faith, what about trust in our civic and political lives? If the commitment to goodness and integrity is a hallmark of trust, how do we see these being exhibited in those who have been chosen to lead us? Do they inspire trust? And if not, what recourse do we have?

I will confess that in my early years, I chose politics as my primary meaning-maker. I believed that if we could only find the right leaders, those with the right ideals and policies and programs, that our country would be able to be an example of peace and justice for the world. I also believed that my responsibility as a citizen was not only to advocate for policies of peace and justice, but to work for the election of those who would carry them out. That sense of a citizen’s obligation remains with me.

Nevertheless, returning to the church in midlife, I saw the inadequacy of political engagement as the foundation for living. Guided by insightful reflection on the Word through preaching and study, I began



to see the wisdom of the psalmist who wrote, “Do not put your trust in princes...” At the same time I encountered the writings of the martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who wrote from his Nazi prison, “...I’m still discovering right up to this moment, that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith.... By this-worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life’s duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously, not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world – watching with Christ in Gethsemane.”

Like Bonhoeffer, I’m still discovering how to live faithfully in the “experiences and perplexities” of our contemporary situation. These days, my guiding question is still the one about trust. I’m learning day by day that trusting in the God found in scripture, in the example of Jesus, in the sacrament of Holy Communion,



and in prayer will help me make better choices, even life-giving ones, about the actions I take for the sake of the world. Today I might join a group making a visit to the offices of my senators. Tomorrow I might be needed to look after my grandson, who has a cold and might not be able to go to his daycare center. Later this week, after Ash Wednesday, I will attend the town hall of my representative in Congress to let him know where I stand on the issues before us. Maybe the mark of ashes will still be on my forehead then.

As I search for trust-worthy leadership in our time, there is one image that continues to echo for me. It comes from the very first episode in the television series, *The West Wing*. Three religious leaders are meeting with some key members of the White House staff, engaged in a

fierce debate. Their discussion has deteriorated into a squabble over what is the First Commandment, which (unaccountably) no one has yet correctly identified. Suddenly the President enters the room. His first words in the seven years of the series, spoken by Martin Sheen (the “acting” President), are the answer to the conflict: “I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods before me.”

How many of our current leaders would be able to recognize those words? Or to live by them? As Bishop McElroy of San Diego has reminded us in a recent speech, we are to see, judge, and act for justice in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the one Word we are called to hear and obey. When we trust in God above all others and all else, our seeing, judging, and acting will indeed work for the renewal of the world. Again, thanks be to God!

Anne Carey is retired from nonprofit administration in the San Francisco Bay Area and has returned to Nashville, Tennessee, where she resides with her spouse. She received the M.T.S. degree from Vanderbilt Divinity School and is a member of First Lutheran Church in Nashville. Anne is honored by the continuing friendship of Sr. Laetitia Bordes, SH, who persists as one of the Thursday afternoon vigil-keepers in San Mateo. The current message of the group, now in its 11th year, is “Resist!!!”

Facing the Hard Questions | by Margaret Mulligan



The current political scenario is somewhat disheartening. There is no longer the ability to have a civil debate. We have moved to extremes.

It seems we no longer come to the table to compromise but instead get entrenched in winning, even crushing opposition. On the national level our two-party system has become divisive and polarizing. I feel like neither party focuses on the “common good” for all.

I believe that our children are our future and how we raise them will reap rewards down the road. Do we make sure all children have access to food, shelter, and education for betterment of society, or is it that only for those who can afford it? Are we making sure people can earn a living wage in order to feed and provide

for their families? I believe some people need extra help at different times in their lives to help them get back on their feet or come back from an unexpected event in their lives. Do we help?

I recently attended Catholics at the Capitol in St. Paul, MN. It was a day-long opportunity to learn about significant issues related to Catholic social teaching and the political climate here in Minnesota. There were several bills being discussed that highlight the concern for the human person. One of the issues discussed was making assisted suicide legal in Minnesota. They showed a video of a young girl in California who no longer can get chemo medicine under her insurance but can get a drug for ending her life. Why does the insurance company get to decide who gets potential lifesaving medi-





...ine and who doesn't? What about hope? What about miracles? As a faith-filled person I believe in both. It is my responsibility to speak up about this issue because someday it could be me or one of my family members that is sitting on that ledge. Thankfully, the dialogue that day with my representatives was a positive one, but as a Christian I need to be watchful and informed to protect those who need advocacy.

Because I am a Catholic Christian, I need to remember and realize it is not "all about me." Jesus calls me in the gospel to care for others, and I must consider a number of wide ranging issues. For example, with the unborn, if we can do neonatal surgery why do we as a society

believe we can take that same life and destroy it under the guise of a woman's choice? Once it becomes an embryo, it is no longer her body but a human being. If indeed we believe that those unborn children should live, then we as Christians need to find ways to provide for them by finding them loving homes or supporting organizations that can, and by supporting the parents who bring them into the world to make a life for themselves and their child. Jesus teaches me to support the most vulnerable people, including the disabled, the elderly, the homeless, children, and those abused or neglected in any way. And I am called to know what is happening in the political arena so that I can speak out by writing letters, calling my legislators and advocating for just laws. The challenge is to be informed about the issues and to be an advocate for those who need it.

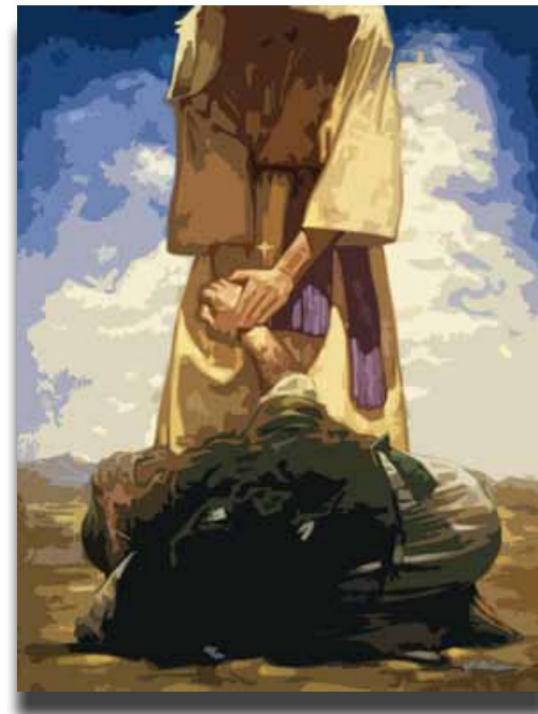
How do my faith and politics intersect? In last year's campaign I heard a candidate answer a question from an atheist in the crowd about how his religion will affect his role as president. I actually appreciated the candidate's response because I think it is also how my faith intersects with politics. He said, "I would hope that, because my faith/religion teaches me that I must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, our values would align even though we don't agree on faith, and that together we would take care of

those most vulnerable in our society." The challenge of course is not to give lip service to these issues in order to get elected, but to follow through with those beliefs in tangible efforts to help others, and provide funding for needed resources.

Within my own circle, I have watched others struggle to pay rent and almost become homeless; I have seen the elderly taken advantage of; and I have witnessed an abandoned baby given a loving home by generous people in our community. It is a scary and humbling process to be a part of. I only need to look at the gospels to realize that Mary was an unwed mother; Joseph, Mary and Jesus

were refugees in Egypt; Jesus hung out with the marginalized and He provided hope and healing to those around him. If I believe the gospel is an invitation to be like Jesus, then that invitation brings me to the political process to advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves.

Margaret Mulligan is a wife, mother, grandmother, sister, daughter, and niece to Sister Jean Kielty. She is a certified spiritual director involved in her parish and other outreach ministries. She has a degree in Social Work and a Certificate in Pastoral Ministry from St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN. She lives in Rochester Minnesota.



Helper Ministry: No Longer Strangers

By Sr. Geraldine Finan, SH



In 1856, when Blessed Mary of Providence gathered a group of like-minded women in prayer and strung beads for a livelihood, they waited for a sign of what God wanted them to do. In time, a knock on the door by a father of a family in need drew them to relationships with a sick mother and her children.

This is the same spirit I have experienced as a Helper nurse. God has blessed me with many grace-filled moments, and countless memories of surprise encounters come to mind.

In San Francisco, a wonderful physician, Dr. Michael, would send us to needy persons. One of these was a young woman who had collapsed on the street and was found by a brother and sister. She had no identification and would not speak. They took her to a room in their house. Dr. Michael said she was dying and nothing could be done but to keep her comfortable. I visited her daily. She would not let us do more than clean her face and hands. We gave her our presence.

One day I arrived and found the brother crying. His sister said the young woman had cried out at midnight and that when she went to her room, the woman whispered, "Thank you, Sister, for returning." Then she died. The sister and brother scoured the neighborhood, discovered she was from Ohio, and accompanied her body home.

On the South side of Chicago, an elderly woman in a rooming house had isolated herself. When I was sent to care for her, she would not answer my knocking. In the darkened hall, a young African American man opened his door. Another man with a long white beard like Santa Claus came into the hallway. Both offered to help. They explained how they left food for her at the foot of her door. With all of us banging, she finally cracked open her door. We explained that the doctor had sent us. She took us into a cluttered space of cabinets and buckets which substituted for a bathroom. The fellows offered to clean the room while I took her to the common bath. While we were gone, they found what they thought might be the name and telephone number of her son. When they called the gentleman, he agreed to come and reunite with his mother.



During the multi-drug resistant TB and AIDS crisis of the 1980's at Harlem Hospital in New York, many patients came and went, and the hospital became a "revolving door" of care. What most impressed me were the mothers who tried to find a secure place for their children while they were hospitalized. I learned of all their efforts to find persons they could trust.

One mother in particular had difficulty finding a safe haven. One Sunday morning, I came upon her again in the ward. After bathing and changing her linen, she smiled at me and said, "I found a family in Texas who has received my children." I rejoiced with her and then went across the room to respond to another patient. When I returned, I found she had passed over peacefully.

In Mexico, at the mountain camp for disabled children, there were several paralyzed young men. I was assigned to teach a seven year old girl





to walk, who also did not talk. I needed a crib for this young girl, who was the size of a three year old. Four of the young men in rough terrain wheelchairs found pipes and colorful lassoes to make a very bright painted crib. How proud we were of such a beautiful accomplishment!

At a refugee camp in Africa, I was assigned to set up TB clinics in five camps. Dr. Alex, himself a refugee, trained the University students – all refugees – to be responsible for the clinics. One of the young men, an artist, made outstanding

drawings of the signs and symptoms of tuberculosis and scripted instructions in the language of the people. We worked together as an effective team.

On the way to the Gold Mines' Clinic in the south of India, I rode in an ambulance with nurses from the Spastic Society. They enjoyed teaching me the history of India during our hours of travel. They wanted to impress me with the knowledge of cultures, languages and different cuisines that were brought to India over centuries of migration. They also gave me valuable lessons in physical therapy for children with cerebral palsy, starting from the crawling stage.

Presently, in New York, I am a member of management teams for long-term care. We network with families, neighbors and pastoral visitors for the sick and infirm. We work together to enhance the most effective support we can offer to those in need. The great grace is the way in which we become related to each other.

Sr. Geraldine(Gerry) Finan is a Bronx girl who entered the Helpers 60 years ago. She is the oldest of thirteen brothers and sisters who have always "had her back" wherever she has gone. God has blessed her abundantly.



Pope Francis delivering the 50th Papal Message for the World Day of Peace, December 2016.

He called on political and religious leaders, on the heads of international institutions, on business and media executives and on all men and women of goodwill to become instruments of reconciliation and adopt nonviolence as a style of politics for peace.



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