

# Corps Connector

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Fall 2019 Retreat Page 4

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# Notes from the Editor

by Dick Bowling

## An Act of Contrition

[As many of you know three or four months ago I moved to the Chesterbrook Residences, a retirement facility on Westmoreland Street in Falls Church. This is the setting for the following]

A couple of weeks back, I was in the serving line for lunch and they were serving corn-on-the-cob; when I got to my table I saw that the piece of corn I received was wrinkled and dried out, not fit to eat. Lloyd, our African-American kitchen manager was standing across the room so I beckoned him over and showed him the corn.

“I’ll get you another piece,” he said. As he was leaving my table I yelled something at him that I immediately forgot. He whipped angrily around stormed back to my table and said, “What did you say? Did you say, ‘Well you better?’” He was furious. I told him, “No, I didn’t say that,” because I really did not remember. Then he left, went back to the kitchen and brought me out a couple of ears of corn.

In the meantime, I’d been sitting at table with two residents, Charlie and Mary, and I asked them, “Did I say what Lloyd just said I said?” Charlie answered, “No, you didn’t say that.” But Mary who is a truth-teller shook her head, yes! I knew right away she was right that I *had* said, “Well you better.” I was dumbstruck. I couldn’t think of a time when I had said something so rude. I was also frightened that I was able to say something like that and immediately forget it. Was my remark a throwback to an earlier time in my life when I *would* have said such a thing especially to a black person? Sometimes I think we can revert to adolescent behavior and not remember. Or was my “not remembering,” an attempt to wipe out an event that I instinctively knew was extremely rude?

Anyway, I believed Mary and resolved to apologize to Lloyd. He was still in the dining room when I finished eating and just as I was approaching him to apologize, several people gathered around him and started asking him questions; soon even more came up to him. So I gave up the idea of apologizing for the time being.

A couple days later, I again tried to apologize, saying to myself, “I’ll do it when I’m finish eating breakfast.” This time Lloyd was strolling around the dining room, as he often does, pouring coffee for the other residents; but

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## Corps Connector

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by the time I'd finished eating, he had vanished. By now I thought, "It's too late to apologize anyway." and I determined to forget the whole idea and forgave myself.

Some mornings later, I was talking to my spiritual reflector, Marty Walsh, about other things that were on my mind; then I remembered the story about Lloyd and my giving up apologizing. But he didn't let me off the hook as easily as I had let myself; saying it's not too late. Sometimes, he said, an apology is better coming after you've had a chance to reflect on what you've done. "Why don't you just go up to him and say, 'I've been thinking about what I said the other day and I want to apologize.'"

With this on my mind, it so happened at lunch that very day I was coming through the food line and Lloyd was standing there with no one around. So I stopped and said to him "Lloyd, do you remember what you said to me last week about the corn-on-the-cob?" "Yes I do," he said. I told him, "When you asked me did I say 'well you better,' I didn't remember what I had said. So I asked Mary, over there, (pointing to her) and she confirmed I had indeed said what you said I said; so I want to apologize for that remark." "Oh," he said, "That's okay." "No, Lloyd," I replied, "it's not okay." I said I believe that regardless of how old I get, there is never an excuse for such rudeness and I am so sorry! At that moment a great smile crossed his face, he held out his hand and shook my hand warmly. Then he said, "Thank you."

Right then a great sense of peace flowed through me. Isn't this what happens when we stop and reflect? When we realize we have hurt someone and we reach out and say we are sorry?

*For Unto Us a  
Child is Born*



*Christmas Greetings-  
From the Corps Connector  
Staff  
Dick, Mary Anne & Mike*

## 2019 Fall Retreat Day at Washington Retreat House Reflection by Mike Mothes

### **WE ARE PEOPLE OF PRAYER AND ACTION**

Some of you may remember seeing this image in the Washington Post in July when 70 men and women exercised their rights to non-violent protest. They were arrested for occupying this space in a federal building as they spoke out and stood up for children in our country being inhumanly detained and separated from their families. At the rally that preceded this demonstration, I connected with friends at NETWORK and the Ignatian Solidarity Network to talk about the role Ignatian Volunteer Corps could play in working for a more just society so overwhelmed by racism.



One result of those conversations was having Sr. Simone Campbell and her colleague, Catherine Gillette, devote a day to be present with IVC Northern Virginia and Washington, DC/Metro MD on September 25<sup>th</sup> at Washington Retreat House.

My Jesuit education at Boston College and subsequent years working in Ignatian communities has taught me the importance of defining my terms. When I use the word “racism” I mean prejudice + power. Because power in the United States is largely, arguably completely, held by white people (mostly white males), I need to face the reality of “white privilege.” I benefit from white privilege. I was raised in an upper middle-class household by parents who were able to easily obtain loans to build a home in East Hampton, NY. These parents were able to see the value of their home grow exponentially, allowing them to grow enough wealth to send me to a private college. As a result, I owe no student debt. And this privilege extends well beyond finances:

I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.

When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.

I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.

I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.

I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.

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(For more examples of White Privilege, read “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”, by Peggy McIntosh)

How do I interact with people who look different than me, people who are handed less power? During the retreat, Sr. Simone reminded us that Jesus put himself in a position to be ministered to by an “outcast” – the Samaritan Woman (John chapter 4). This should make us nervous. It *could* be just a “really nice” story. Let’s look at it in the context of racial consciousness in our country. I need you to engage with racism as an issue. I need to see myself in solidarity with *all* my neighbors. I do not believe we are meant to be individualistic. The spiritual call is to be in community. The core of the gospel is about community—the heart of the Christian message. Individualism has led to policies that widen the wealth gap.

What is my call to action? I need to change how I educate myself. I must see that life is not just about people who look like me. I need to talk about policies, laws, white supremacy. And I need to be aware of white privilege. Sr. Simone reminded us that we likely feel resistance when we have conversations about systemic racism. Resistance is the edge of spiritual growth. If I am uncomfortable, nervous, I am being called to growth and transformation. This is the trouble I am invited to walk into.

This year is an invitation, not a threat. When we experience fear, we can notice it and accept it. We can name the fear. Sr. Simone encouraged us to: speak your part, stay engaged, leave room for everyone.

After we finished our small group work processing the wealth gap in the United States between whites and people of color, here are some of the reactions from the large group:

Eye-opening...systematic nature of racism...history lesson.

I learned that I have to pay attention to legislation that is passed.

Reparations don’t sound crazy, they make sense. What can I do?

In response to these reactions, Sr. Simone left our group with the following five characteristics of holiness offered by Pope Francis:

- We will be persevering—we stand on the shoulders of giants who have persevered
- Have joy and a sense of humor—be anchored in the spiritual life
- Passion and boldness—this is not a time for half measures
- Act in community—we have the support we need
- Live in constant prayer—we need to be people of prayer AND action in community, in solidarity.

## A Sincere and Loving Thank You

from Dick Bowling

I'd like to say thank you to all you wonderful loving IVC people; without your help I would never have been able to move to Chesterbrook. There was Neota and Mary Anne who spent many hours packing boxes. And Art who took my computer apart and stored it in his car. There was also Eliana and Pedro who attacked my kitchen and packed everything up. In the meantime, Marty was there about every day making sure everything ran smoothly.

After the movers had finished their move, you all returned and unpacked the boxes you had packed; and Art restored my computer without a glitch. A few days later, John and Kathy White came over and spent hours re-hanging all my pictures. Early the following week, Marty and Art made sure everything in my little cottage was cleared out and hauled to my new home. For the most part, I just sat in a chair, not lifting a finger.

Then Lynda, dear Lynda, who had spent so many hours helping me get ready to move the last time, came over again and helped me think through the many imponderables that come with moving into unfamiliar places. She gifted me with a shower curtain, a bathmat and a small storage cabinet as home warming presents.

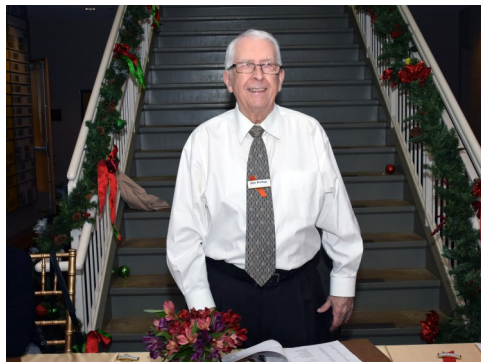
Outside my living room window is a bright, bright streetlight that even with the blinds drawn shines in like a search light. I mentioned this to Lynda and immediately she started to search for room-darkening drapes, found them on Amazon and told me about them. Right away I ordered them and they look and work just great!

In IVC, we are a community. And this story is our story as Americans and as Christians coming together

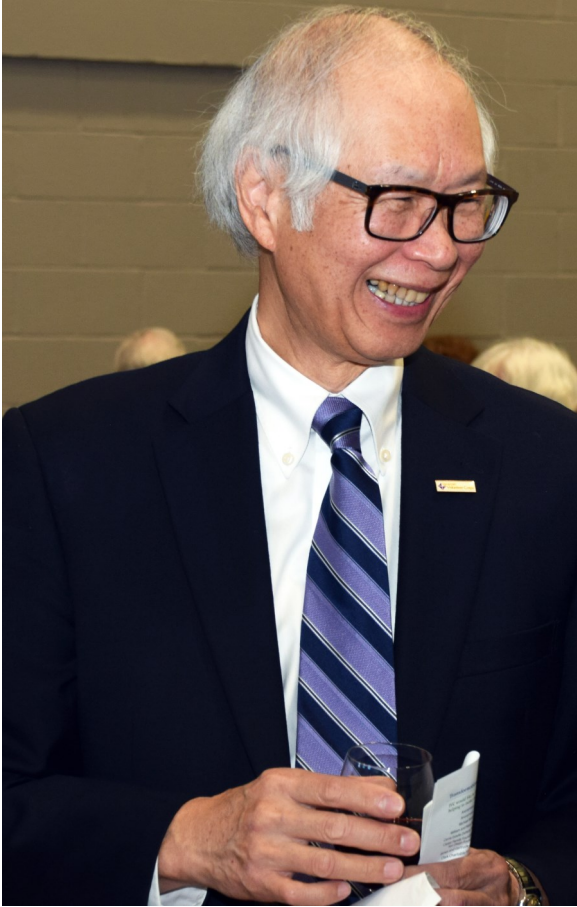


*Don't Forget  
Christmas Party/City Group  
Monday, December 16, 2019 10:00—1:30  
St. Marks Catholic Church*

# IVC 25th Anniversary Celebration



# IVC 25th Anniversary Celebration (continued)



Photos by Bob Gamberelli