

# Corps Connector

Volume 13, Number 4

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**Fr. Bill Kelley, S.J.**  
**Fall Retreat Facilitator**  
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# Notes from the Editor

## The Old Age of Old Age

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Virginia Regional  
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I'm 12 years old, standing in our backyard on "M" Street in the South End of Louisville; leaning against the great weeping willow tree that was both our play house and our gym set. Soon to graduate from Holy Name School, I had survived the vicissitudes of childhood; this late spring morning I was feeling rather poetic and reflective. Yes, even 12 year olds have moments of insight!

Pondering my short existence, I was thinking to myself, "Boy, you really got this being a kid thing down cold, you really got it licked." At that moment a vision came to me; I'm no longer standing in my yard but on a mountaintop, birds singing lustily, sun smiling brightly. I saw the whole rest of my life spread out before me. "I have arrived; I will always be who I am right now; I will be 12 years old forever."



But Mother Nature had other plans for me than my 12-year-old vision; she was busy changing my body in preparation for me to become a father someday. But, like Martin Luther King Jr., I also had a dream. A dream that had gripped me from the time I was six; to be a priest when I grew up. Mother Nature was probably freaking out trying to reconcile this insoluble conflict between her plans for my fatherhood and my dream of a life as a celibate priest.

Flash forward 20 or so years, I'm about to turn 50 and at the home of my dear friend, Louis White. We're discussing my anxiety about getting old. Louis smiles, "Dick, there are three stages to growing old, you are about to enter the first, the youth of old age."

Flash forward another 25 years. I am sitting in my arm chair in my third floor condominium in Fairfax, Virginia. Again reflecting: I have survived many thousand times the number of vicissitudes since I was leaning against the willow in our back yard. I was once more saying to myself, "Man, you really got this being a grown-up thing down cold, you got it licked." I still was able—be it a bit more creakily—to climb the three flights of stairs to my condo; I could walk—maybe more creakily still—anywhere I wanted to go. At that moment, not so dramatically as when I was 12, a vision came to me; I saw the rest of my life spread open before me; I would live this life of a 78-year-old.

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### Corps Connector

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But, a couple years later, Shazam! It all changed. (Remember the crippled little newsboy who shouted Shazam and was transformed into the mighty Captain Marvel?) Well, it was like the exact opposite happened to me. I was changed into something more like that cripple relying on using his stick to get around.

The first time I fell down, I was leaving my dentist office on Park Ave. in Falls Church blithely ambling down the outside steps. Suddenly the next moment without warning I was sliding on my face across the cement walk at the bottom of the stairs wondering “when am I ever going to stop sliding!”

A kind woman driving along Park Ave. witnessed my predicament. Not turning her engine off, leaving her car door open right there in the middle of the street she dashed over to me and like an angel from heaven, summoned the strength to set me back on my feet. No, I really wasn't hurt—much; mostly my dignity. She helped me back up the steps and escorted me to my dentist office where his staff patched me up.

Mother Nature had stepped in again like she did when I was 12; this time telling me an 80-year-old really must start holding on to stair railings.

I continued to fall some—thankfully always gently—like this past Memorial Day. That morning I went for a walk—with my stick!—on the W&OD trail. It being a holiday the usual Monday morning traffic jam on 495 became for the day ‘the trail pedestrian and bike traffic jam’ : bikers yelling to me “passing on your left,” as they whooshed by, babies screaming in their prams, teams of high school runners flashed by in a blur; it was a maelstrom. I could take but four minutes of this, before my brain went chaotic. I turned around to go back to my car, but my legs and feet keep trying to stay with the manic tempo I'm trying to flee.

By the time I get to my car I could barely put the brakes on on my wildly churning feet. My intention was to grab the car handle to steady myself, instead I missed it, fell sideways onto the pavement ending up staring directly at the rear wheel of my car.

I wasn't hurt; traffic on Lincoln Avenue continued to zoom by where I lay. The street is wide so I know I'm in no real danger of being hit. I relax and wait for whomever the Lord would send me; someone who would actually notice I wasn't inspecting my rear tire, and stop. My next beautiful angel finally did stop. I patiently watched her pull in, park, get out and come toward me, I smile. She asked if I was okay. I said yes I just need some help getting on my feet and she found the strength to stand me up.

I think Mother Nature is just about through tampering with my body; I continue to tread warily on my journey. At 84, in fairly good health, I ask myself what stage on this journey into old age am I at now? Middle-age? Yet my many trips to the doctors say: “the old age of old age.” Sometimes after another fall, I tell myself: you are in the “Decrepitude of old age!”

The Lord continues to remind me that many more visions of my future as at twelve, fifty, or seventy-eight may come before I'm finished. So as I sit here a new vision opens. No mountains, no birds, no broad vistas; but facing a new reality that says: “Walk bravely into the future, be ready to be surprised by God every day, we are not alone on this journey, trust that others will always be there, and be the wisdom old people are called to embrace!

# FALL RETREAT: THE GRACES OF AGING



For 3 days we pondered how God has new vistas in store for us during our senior years. God gazes at us and brings us very close to heal us and make us one with each other and with God in service to the world. We, the Northern Virginia and DC/Metro regions gathered at Loyola-on-the-Potomac Retreat House in mid-September for a short sabbatical beautifully led by Fr. Bill Kelley, SJ.

## **Some of the New Vistas Fr. Bill opened for us:**

### ***“God Isn’t Finished with Me Yet”***

Using the scripture stories of Elizabeth and Sarah and Abraham to illustrate the truth that our senior years are not an *end* of our usefulness, but a *beginning* of new possibilities if we can be open to the power of God, we reflected:

“As you begin your day or any new endeavor, imagine that God is gazing at you. *How* is God looking at you? With love? Patience? Frustration? Hopefulness? What is God saying to you?”

*As I try to write this article, I imagine God is smiling and saying, “I’m here to help. What do you need?” I say, “What do you want me to tell them?”*

### ***“What is prayer?”***

The definition of prayer that is so familiar — “the lifting up of our minds and hearts to God” — thanks to a faulty translation, is usually taken to mean that it is we who do the lifting. It is more accurate to say that prayer is our mind and heart *being lifted up* to God. It is the work of God! Our work is to make ourselves available. We go to a quiet place, offer God our time, give thanks, and ask for what we want.

### ***“Healing of Memories”***

We reflected on the Old Testament story of Joseph and his brothers as an example of reconciliation and forgiveness. And there is a difference between the two. Forgiveness involves abandoning the resentment that one is *entitled* to as well as abandoning the desire for revenge and retribution. Reconciliation requires at least two people, whereas forgiveness can be achieved without the cooperation of the one who offended.

### ***“Suffering, Pain & Diminishment as Transformative, Mystical, & Redemptive”***

Our final conference brought us face to face with the reality of suffering. Although suffering is never a good in itself, it is a reality of life and can bring us close to God (mystical) and help us to grow (transformative.) I am struggling with the redemptive aspect of suffering, but what has come up for me is this: In all three gospels Jesus tells his disciples that in order to follow him, we must deny ourselves and take up our cross daily, for “whoever wishes to save her life will lose it, but if she loses her life for Jesus’ sake, she will save it.” Jesus is the blueprint. It is in the dying that we are saved.

**Surprise Treats:** Along with deep spiritual work, the retreat also brought us a few ‘surprise treats’.

On Tuesday afternoon many of us visited the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco. Nestled in a bucolic setting along a country road is their brick chapel along with a community building and individual hermitages for each nun. We met Mother Virginia in a large room with an airy wrought iron screen running across the middle of the room. Mother Virginia stood behind the gate and we stood on the other side. Mother told us the history of the Carmelites in Port

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Tobacco and went through their daily schedule of rising, praying, eating and working. A smile lit up her face as she talked, she literally bounced and swayed. She entered the order in 1951 so she is probably in her 80s but looked much younger and was so joyful and engaging that our time there flew by.

The Carmelite monastery at Port Tobacco was the first in the United States and was founded in 1790. At present there are 10 nuns living there including 2 novices from Northern Virginia!

*“As the heart is enclosed in the body and hidden from public view, so are contemplatives within the Church. The heart works best when left alone, enclosed and hidden from view to do its work.”* <http://www.carmelofporttobacco.com/page2.html>

TEAM MIKE! (Mike Goggin and Mike Mothes), were stellar in providing organization, support, spirit(s), music and entertainment! Mike Mothes' Meet & Greet on Tuesday evening was a highlight providing wonderful insight into how committed, prepared, thoughtful, human (always a good trait) and funny our new NV regional director is. Welcome Mike Mothes! (Pronounced mo'-tiss. He made us say it 3 times so learn and remember!)

Although there were no beautiful sunsets to enjoy on this retreat, God's beauty shone and was reflected in the deep sharing we experienced in our small groups and in the joy of being together.



**THESE DATES**

## IVC Christmas Party

Where: St Luke's Catholic Church in McLean, VA

When: Thursday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018

10:00am – 2:00pm

(Gathering at 10:00am. Program begins at

10:30am)

## IVC January Day of Reflection

Where: Benedictine Monastery in Bristow, VA

When: Wednesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 10:00am – 3:00pm

Retreat Leaders:

Marie Dennis (Co-President of Pax Christi International)

Fr. Joe Nangle, OFM (Our Lady Queen of Peace Church)

# The Love Pins That Stick in the Map of My Heart

**T**HE OTHER DAY IN MY CITY GROUP we were discussing “nature: the first terrain” in *Finding God in Ordinary Time*. Everyone of us shared a unique story about the part nature played in our childhoods, from Wisconsin to Long Island and in between. Are you drawn, as I am, to a map with pins marking the places people are from? I find it fascinating to gather stories about our places of origin. Although I am geographically challenged, I love a map with pins and the stories that pin those places to our hearts, especially the outside places, the natural places. As Christine Eberle says, “...just go outside.” When we are outside—of ourselves—the map is so full of pins!



IVC stuck my pin at the Centreville Immigration Forum where I am the volunteer coordinator. One day last summer I was gazing at a map of Central America on the wall at the Centreville Labor Resource Center. As I squinted to see the place names, Pedro stood beside me with a pin in hand, also squinting. I asked him what place he was looking for (not sure he could read), and he replied that he, like many of our member-workers, is from the Quiche region of Guatemala. The Quiche region was devastated by the 36 year long Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996).

Together our two sets of eyes located the area in the North West of the country. He stretched to plant his pin on the map and shared the beginnings of his story; while driving a bus in the Quiche region, he fell in love with one of the regular riders on his route, a college student. The young woman’s mother was adamantly against their budding relationship—threats turned into physical attacks and eventually led to Pedro’s fleeing to the United States and Centreville. The love story survived and his now mother-in-law lives in his house in his village in the highlands of Quiche! Pedro’s first language is Ixil, a Mayan language spoken in three villages in the Guatemalan highlands. During our chat I learned that he also speaks Spanish, very respectable English and a “little bit” of Korean! Pedro often works on projects for the Korean residents of the area. By necessity he has learned phrases and words helpful to the work. You see, the Centreville map is a colorful collection of pins from many places in the world! All because of a pin on a map, I grew in my concept and understanding of why God places us where He does.

Another day, a man was watching the World Cup. Feigning a pinhead’s worth of understanding, I asked how his team was faring. Chibundi said Nigeria was still in the soccer tournament and he patiently helped me understand the complicated structure. We settled back into our zones but glanced at each other as we listened to the murmurings of the ESOL class across the room. The volunteer instructor calmly worked with three Spanish speaking workers on words and phrases to help them communicate while on a job. My World Cup tutor smiled slightly, filled with compassion and care he said, “How very hard it must be to learn a whole new language, I grew up speaking English, they have to start from the beginning.” Just like that, another pin in the map.

Just as maps help us understand our world and pins help us understand each other, IVC has been a guide on my spiritual path. Looking for a new direction, I was introduced to IVC in a class taught by Joanie Coolidge and other IVC’ers. Joanie worked hard to find a place for my pin! We went to a faith leaders’ breakfast at the Centreville Labor Resource Center in early 2015. Joanie gently pricked me a few times, encouraging me to get outside, expand my map’s lines.

It’s been almost four years now and the map of my world, the number of pins I’ve added to my story, and the love and faith I see in the people I’ve met have helped me see God in an ever-widening world.

The Centreville Immigration Forum is a young grassroots organization founded by a community seeking ways of acceptance and inclusion. Dedicated to providing assistance, education, and advocacy for immigrants, particularly when it comes to labor rights, CIF is committed to democratic worker participation, empowerment and leadership development. The primary project of CIF is the Labor Center, a safe place that provides an organized structure where homeowners and contractors can negotiate fair work arrangements with day laborers and where member-workers can build the skills they need to support themselves and their families.

“[L]et us continue to love each other, to look out for each other along the way: to welcome whoever comes close to us, and set aside whatever difficulty it might bring.”

From Pope John XXIII's famous "Moonlight Speech" on the evening of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Oct. 11, 1962.

by Wynne Tysdal





# What You Can Do to Slow Down or Stop Global Warming

by Sylvia Diss

In 1992, THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS ISSUED A STATEMENT, IN PART: “HOW WE USE AND SHARE THE GOODS OF THE Earth is a moral question”. And In 1999, the US. Catholic bishops reminded us that “At its core, global climate change is about the future of God’s creation and the one human family ....It is about our responsibility to those who come after us.”

More recently, in 2015, in his Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls our attention to “how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace”. He speaks not only about the integrity of the ecosystem, but of the integrity of human life within the ecosystem. How can we, in our community of faith, deepen our understanding of creation, and our responsibility as Christians? How can we best care for “our common home”?

The results of our inability to choose sustainability and restraint is rapidly becoming apparent .....extreme weather patterns, floods, forest fires, melting Arctic ice, sea level rise. Several weeks ago, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a dire report that made crystal clear that we have about a decade to stop catastrophic levels of climate change.

There are some things we can do, if we will. Individual change of wasteful habits, and careless consumerism is important. Flying and driving less, eating less meat, heating and cooling homes less, reducing food waste, converting to renewable fuels, can spark collective action when others are inspired by the example of a few. Reading good books for information is useful, e.g., Paul Hawken’s *Drawdown*, Elizabeth Colbert’s *The Sixth Extinction*, and Georgetown Professor Jack Haught’s many books on evolution. *Laudato Si' News* of the Global Catholic Climate Movement offers a broad range of information of interest to Catholics, including #TheClimatePilgrimage, the Season of Creation, divestment from dirty fossil fuels, collaboration with Buddhists, and the rapid decline in insect populations which threaten world food supply.

**However, focusing on individual actions might distract people from pressuring corporations and government officials to lower greenhouse gas emissions and enact the broader policy change we need to meet our climate goals.** I suggest we take the following actions to broaden our concern:

- ⇒ **Advocate for action on the federal and local level.** Call the Congressional Switchboard **202 224 3121** for information on U.S. senators and representatives. Write letters, or cards (stock up on postcards and stamps), highlighting specific issues. Have their office numbers, as well as the White House Comment Line, on your bulletin board. Visit them in their DC offices. Do these things repeatedly to drive home the message that action on climate change is a high priority for you.
- ⇒ **Talk to your friends, family, peers.** Share your thoughts and values, and listen to theirs. Choose concepts like “responsibility” and “the grandchildren’s future” to find common ground. Draw on the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching and our concern for the poor, who are the first to suffer from climate change.
- ⇒ **Join with others.** Join national, state and local organizations that are taking action on climate change, e.g., Citizens Climate Lobby (a non-partisan organization which advocates for national policies to address climate change, such as putting a price on carbon emissions); Network, the Social Justice Lobby; the Union of Concerned Scientists; The Natural Resources Defense Council; and Indivisible local groups.
- ⇒ **Teachers** have a special opportunity to incorporate climate change information. *The Climate Literacy and Energy Awareness Network* has excellent resources. A basic primer on climate change science is *Climate Change Causes and Evidence* from the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. Or go to [www.NRDC.org/stories/how-you-can-stop-global-warming](http://www.NRDC.org/stories/how-you-can-stop-global-warming).

Pope Francis’ vital question, which each of us must answer, remains: “What kind of a world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?”

Sylvia is a member of PAX, an Intentional Eucharistic Community, the same worshipping community I belong to. She is a strong advocate for reducing the effects of Global Warming I asked her to share her insights with the IVC Community—Ed.





A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt.

He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one."

The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?"

The grandfather answered: "The one I feed."

~ Native American Story ~



# Fall Retreat Social



# Upcoming Events

**CHRITMAS PARTY**  
 St. Luke's Catholic Church  
 Thursday December 13th, 2018  
 10:00-2:00  
 Program begins at 10:30

**JANUARY DAY OF REFLECTION**  
 Wednesday, Jan. 23 2019  
 Benedictine Monastery  
 Bristow, VA  
 Facilitators: Marie Dennis & Joe Nangle

## Northern Virginia Region 2018-19 City Groups

<b>Good Shephard</b> 8710 Mount Vernon Highway Alexandria, Virginia 1st Wednesday 10:00 am-12:00 noon	<b>Our Lady of Good Council</b> 8601 Wolftrap Road Vienna, VA 22182 1st Thursday 10:00 am-12:00 noon	<b>Our Lady Queen of Peace</b> 2700 19th Street South Arlington, VA 22204 2nd Tuesday 10:00 am-12:00 noon	<b>The Broadway</b> 502 W. Broad St. Falls Church, VA 22046 2nd Wednesday 10:00 am-12:00 noon
February 6	February 7	February 12	February 13
March 6	March 7	March 12	March 13
April 3	April 4	April 9	April 10
May 1	May 2	May 14	May 8

<b>Saint Ann's</b> 5300 North 10th St Arlington, VA 22205 2nd Thursday 10:00 am-12:00 noon	<b>St. John Neumann's</b> 11900 Lawyers Road Reston VA 20191 3rd Tuesday 10:00 am-12:00 noon	<b>St. Joseph's</b> 711 Columbus St. Alexandria, VA 22314 3rd Wednesday 10:00 am-12:00 noon
February 14	February 19	February 20
March 14	March 19	March 20
April 11	April 16	April 17
May 9	May 21	May 15