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The American Association of Interchurch Families

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Living Bridges: Interchurch Families as Domestic Churches

A summary by Mary Jane Glauber of the Keynote Speech of the AAIF 2008 Biennial Conference presented by the Roman Catholic Theologian, Daniel Olsen

Daniel Olsen had served as a pastoral associate for several years prior to entering graduate studies at Loyola University of Chicago where he would work toward his Ph.D. During this experience, he became alerted to the difficulties encountered by spouses preparing for an interchurch marriage. Their pastoral needs struck him as being often overlooked and he found that the theology of the Roman Catholic Church seemed to be ahead of the pastoral realities. This surprised him and in part led to his decision to return to the academic community in 2001.

His studies at Loyola served to confirm his suspicion that Christian theological convergence on issues such as mission, service, marriage, baptism, sacramentality, etc. remains ahead of the pastoral ministry regarding interchurch families. He also found that a good deal of literature in Roman Catholic circles has taken note of the term "domestic church" to promote a sense of the sacredness and ecclesial role of Christian families. In nearly all discussions of the domestic church, however, little mention is made of the realities of interchurch families. Their concerns do not seem to influence many contemporary visions of the domestic church, which therefore makes them limited in his estimation. Daniel Olsen thought that by uniting these two issues, namely, the reality of interchurch families with an understanding of domestic church, would prove fruitful on two fronts. (I feel that I should interject at this point by way of background information that between 40% to 60% of all marriages in the Catholic Church each year are with other baptized Christians.

What is new for the ARK? The ARK has an ISSN. This number will allow the printed version of the ARK to be placed on library shelves for the first time. This should make it easier for interchurch couples, pastors and theologians to find AAIF in their archives. We are a non-profit organization of all volunteer ecumenists. It takes time to write articles for the ARK. What other incentive can we offer to busy ecumenists to take time out from their work schedules to write an article for us? The hope is that the ISSN will encourage more people to write and then submit articles for the ARK.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE KEYNOTE SPEECH AT THE 2008 AAIF BIENNIAL CONFERENCE IN LOUISVILLE

First, it could offer a more inclusive vision of domestic church than the often denominationally focused one that tends to present itself. He noted that we should be celebrating diversity when we present models or visions of our

homes. Second, by putting the concerns of the interchurch families within an established framework of "Domestic Church," he hopes to offer a new way of viewing the gifts that interchurch families can offer to the current state of ecumenism and ecclesiology. As a theologian, he asked what can we learn from interchurch families?



AAIF 2008 BIENNIAL CONFERENCE HELD IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

In the early 1980's interchurch families began meeting with Father George Kilcourse in Louisville. With help from the Highland Community Ministries, we met at various churches in the area to share our stories. We were aware of the very active group of interchurch families in Omaha and of the ecumenical and interchurch families group based at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Virginia Beach, Virginia. In the late, 1980's the Louisville group began writing the ARK in an effort to pull all of these groups together.

We had heard about the progress that had already been made in England and in France through the faithful effort of Martin and Ruth Reardon, who had established the English Association of Interchurch Families, and of Father Rene

Beaupere, who was involved with the Foyers Mixtes.

In 1990, Father Kilcourse, asked Pete, my husband, and me if we would consider attending the international interchurch families conference that would be held in Northern Ireland that year.

Northern Ireland? How would they manage in an interchurch marriage? We went to N.I.M.M.A.'s sponsored conference at Corrymeela and it was a life changing experience for all of the family, from our youngest child to us. Our oldest daughter returned twice as a volunteer at Corrymeela and our youngest daughter returned to do research on their integrated schools, Catholic/ Protestant. Once we started going to these conferences, we found that we become more like family. Once you go to the first conference, you are more likely



Top: Lamar Burton gave us a private guided tour of the backside of Churchill Downs before the conference. Bottom: Dining on the Ohio River, a chance to socialize with our interchurch friends

AAIF MEMBERS TOUR, PRAY, STUDY ECUMENISM AND SOCIALIZES TOGETHER AT THE 2008 AAIF CONFERENCE IN KENTUCKY



WE BECOME A COMMUNITY OR KINDRED TO FAMILY.



...to return to a second conference and then a third. We can't tell you how to live your interchurch marriage, but, collectively, we can bring in informed speakers and get accurate and clear information. Informally, we can share our stories over a meal.

AAIF Overview, photos, and Brief 2008 Biennial Conference Summary by Mary Jane Glauber

SATURDAY MORNING - THE TABLES ARE TURNED: THE PASTORS SHARE THEIR STORIES

This was new! This was fresh! This was just what we had been waiting to hear. Clergy understood what we were experiencing. We had only heard the interchurch families stories told from our perspective. Father Kilcourse, the author of "Double Belonging, Interchurch Families and Christian Unity," pulled together a wonderful panel.

Father George Kilcourse served as the moderator for the panel discussion. The panel members were: Rev. James Holladay, the Pastor from Lyndon Baptist Church; The Rt. Rev. David B. Reed, the Retired Episcopal Bishop, Diocese of Kentucky; Elaine Hall, candidate for ordination in the United Methodist Church - M. Div. Yale, who is in an interchurch marriage herself; The Rev. Fr. Gregory Wingenbach, retired Greek Orthodox Church Pastor; Father Ronald Ketteler, Chair of the Department of Theology at Thomas More University, Covington, KY; and Dr. Carol J. Cook, who teaches Pastoral Care and Counseling at the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and who is in an interchurch marriage herself.

Some of the highlights that I recollect from this dynamic presentation addressed the following topics:

There are often two cultures and perhaps different languages that are being brought together as well as two family systems.

- There are two church cultures being brought together as well.
- Language and terminology may need to be clarified.
- Sometimes, if a spouse goes to the other spouse's church they are perceived or fear they will be perceived as becoming a member of the spouse's church so they resist even going to their spouse's church.
- However, the spouse may simply want the company of their spouse in their church and not the conversion of their spouse. They may want to be perceived as a couple or a family by their own church community in a space that is spiritually important to them.
- A couple should be equally yoked [This I believe is very important so that the chance of spousal abuse is reduced and so that a healthy family environment is encouraged].
- Ecumenism has been put on the "back burner" while individually churches and communities attempt to compete to resolve the same issues. Working together would be far more efficient.
- Summary by M.J. Glauber



Panel discussion in Grubb's Meeting Room at the LPTS



THIS CLERGY PANEL DISCUSSION WAS SO WELL RECEIVED THAT WE WERE RELUCTANT TO BREAK FOR LUNCH



THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON CHRISTIAN UNITY, APRIL 27-30 2009 PHOENIX

AAIF has placed an information booth and has had a genuine representation at the NWCU for the past two years, giving out information about our organization and our up-coming conferences to other ecumenists. At each workshop, AAIF has made important contacts and it has been important for other ecumenists to be able to pick up our information and brochures. All AAIF members are invited to participate and encouraged to attend this workshop as ecumenists. The topics being discussed will be of interest. General sign up is on line. Can you help "to man" the AAIF table this year? Please contact

AAIF.co.chair@gmail.com

A MESSAGE FROM IRELAND
from William Odling-Smee
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Anne and I have been privileged to attend the conferences of Associations of Interchurch Families in three countries this year. In April we attended our own Irish conference held in Dromantine, Co. Down; in June we attended the conference of the American Association of Interchurch Families in Louisville, Kentucky; and in August we attended the English, Scottish and Welsh Association of Interchurch Families held in Swanwick, Derbyshire. The hospitality of our sister organisations was wonderful, and there were times when we felt like royalty. So it is interesting to reflect on these experiences, and to look for some meaning.

Interchurch family organisations exist so that members may support one another in what may be difficult situations. And these are usually about the rules that various churches have put in place to make it difficult for their members to marry out of their "mother" church. We have come a long way since 1959 when we were married, and things are greatly improved, but there are still churches and individual priests and ministers who make it very difficult to marry someone of another denomination. Interestingly there appears to be very little difference between the USA, England and Ireland in this respect. And as this problem has eased since the Second Vatican Council, the problem of sharing communion in a shared marriage has become more acute. The ability to share communion in a marriage between

members of different churches has become very important to associations of Interchurch families. In 2005, Fr. George Kilcourse led an international delegation to the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU) in the Vatican in Rome. On that occasion the PCPCU assured us that they thought that it was very reasonable for Interchurch couples to take the Eucharist together, but that it was a matter for local bishops, some of whom still thought that this practice must be forbidden. We were urged to put pressure on our local bishops so that they could be brought up to date. And of course this is not a matter that is confined to the Roman Catholic Church. One finds it in the Orthodox tradition and amongst many other Evangelical churches. Why do Christians feel that those who believe that Jesus is Lord, but do not want to worship or to conduct their church organisation in a uniform way, are not proper Christians? It seems to me to be very unlike the way that Jesus would have behaved.

But the other problem for those that wish to contract an Interchurch marriage is families. And this is often because of what grandparents or parents learned in their youth. Old attitudes die hard! We in Ireland are particularly conscious of this, for Christian denominations have defined the two sides in the communal conflict that has been going on here for many years. "Catholics" define those who espouse the Nationalist cause, and "Protestants" define those who espouse the Unionist cause. Since the onset of the "Peace Process" in the North of Ireland, these communities have drawn further apart, and those that marry across this divide are often at risk. We

know of many Interchurch couples that have been driven out of social housing because they are seen as a threat to the majority in that housing community. An attempt is now being made to create shared housing communities, and NIMMA (our Irish Interchurch families organisation) is playing a leading role together with other government and voluntary agencies. Please pray that these efforts may be fruitful.

When we were in Kentucky we were very well looked after. We visited the Monastery of Gethsemani, where Thomas Merton is buried, we visited a bourbon distillery, and we visited Churchill Downs. It will rank as one of our memorable occasions, and we thank you all for it. If anyone from the American AIF would like to come to our NIMMA conference next year or any subsequent years, you would be most welcome.

William Odling-Smee
 Belfast, Northern Ireland



Ray Temmerman sends his thanks to all who worked to make the 2008 AAIF Conference happen:

We're home now, and able to sit down at the computer to share our thoughts...First off, I want to give a heartfelt thanks to all who worked so hard to prepare for the conference.... (continued on next page)



Lamar Burton led a free optional pre-tour to the backside of Churchill Downs Race Track in Louisville, KY in June 2008 before the AAIF Biennial Conference.

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A MESSAGE FROM CANADA FROM RAY TEMMERMAN:

..As we drove back to Chicago (to catch their flight to Canada), Fenella and I talked about the highlights for us... Ray said: "Here are mine:"

- Seeing old friends in person again, or for the very first time (having 'met' them on the listserve), as well as new friends, be they couples coming for the first time, individuals looking to see how they could support family members who were approaching interchurch life, or engaged couples developing their relationship with each other and each other's churches.
- Dan Olsen's presentation on Friday evening. In very simple ways, Dan shared with us his sense of interchurch families as bridge. He spoke about the needs of interchurch families, but not in the same way as we normally speak of need, a term we have tended to see pejoratively. Rather, he spoke of the needs a bridge has to be itself, wholly and completely. He felt quite clearly that we were exactly that, couples and families called to be bridges between traditions, between the cultures of our various traditions, between our churches. And being a bridge meant we had different needs than being, say, a roadway. I'm glad he didn't spell it out much further than that, but

instead gave us the opportunity for our minds and hearts to go on, filling in the blanks according to our own situations. For myself, I'll first try to differentiate 'need' as we tend to talk about it, and 'need' as I believe he talked about it. 'Need,' as I have seen it, has to do with seeing a bridge that is in a sorry state and looking at what is needed to fix it up, paint it, make it able to survive. 'Need,' as I think Dan was talking about it, had to do with making sure the underpinnings were sound on both ends, the girders solid and strong, the planking stable and firm so others could walk across, discover what lay on the other side of the divide. In other words, 'need' had nothing to do with maintaining a struggling structure, but in building it, firmly rooted, whole and strong so it could be fully that which it was called to be.

- He also spoke of interchurch families as prism. He didn't touch on that very much, but for me it tied in beautifully with a remark by Elaine Hall, in which she spoke of (and Elaine, correct me if I mis-paraphrase you) looking forward to a time when churches could be seen much like the religious orders, i.e. with their various unique charisms contributing to a unified whole. I saw interchurch families as a prism which takes beautiful, clear 'white' light and shows that in fact it is made up of a

spectrum of light; or takes a spectrum of light and shows that, together, it is beautiful, clear white light which is impossible without all the individual colours. Take away any one of them, run them through a prism, and you cannot have 'white' light. Like all analogies, it falls down along the way, but I found it wonderfully evocative of a sense of unity in diversity.

- Finally, I was pleased to discover that Dan, a Catholic married to a Catholic, with a young family, had come to the question of interchurch families as domestic church through the pastoral work he had done in a parish. In particular (at least in my mind), he had seen the way the RCIA program was being run, and felt that the theology behind it wasn't being appropriately reflected in the way it was used with interchurch couples. For me, that was a wonderful moment, seeing that we had moved to a point where interchurch couples and same-church couples, interchurch couples and theologians within a same-church setting, could dialogue together to explore (Continued on the next page)



*<Windows at
the Abbey of
Gethsemani in
the Nave*

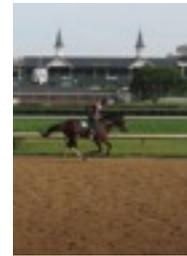
(Ray Temmerman's Report continued from the previous page)

and develop the charisms of each for the good of all.

- Dan also grounded a theology of interchurch families as domestic church, not in marriage, but in baptism. He pointed out that there may be other forms of domestic church where marriage does not play a part, and that to require marriage would be to deny the reality of domestic church there. I have tended to see our marriage as a key component, yet as I reflect further, I think it may be very important to recognize that while marriage (which is understood in different ways in various churches) enhances our unity, the primary grounding for our unity in Christ is baptism.

- Time: Time for input, time for simply talking together, catching up, exploring, discovering, sharing. It was for us a wonderfully paced program, enough input without being too much.

The Back side of Churchill Downs looking toward the Twin Spires as a race horse enters the tract to begin its morning workout >



The nave of the church at the Abbey of Gethsemani, at Trappist, Kentucky

<http://www.monks.org/>

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The Rt. Rev. David Reed, Retired Episcopal Bishop of Kentucky; > Beverly Collins, from South Carolina; Father George Kilcourse, AAIF Pastoral Adviser, & Franz Green at lunch.



Laura and Franz Green from Virginia Beach, VA standing in front of "My Old Kentucky Home" at Pleasant Hill in Bardstown, KY. Stephen Foster wrote his song by that name while staying here. <

"BRIDGING THE DIVIDE" THE AAIF DVD HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND IS READY FOR DISTRIBUTION

First viewing of the AAIF DVD at the 2008 Conference in Louisville > & Small group informal discussions >



We also enjoyed the launch of a 15-minute video on interchurch families, produced in Louisville through the generosity of a family there, and drawing from various conferences held over the years. I'd say its specific target audience would be clergy or people wanting an

assurance of the value of interchurch family life, given that it has four theologians speaking on the interchurch family reality, with various interchurch families seen talking in the background as the theologians present their understandings. The AAIF folks would clearly welcome wide distribution of the CD. I don't recall whether people should write to the Burtons, the Glaubers, or just who to order a copy, so with this email I'll ask one of them to jump in with the answer to that. I don't know that a final price has been decided on, but I

would think it will be quite reasonable, enough to cover reproduction and postage costs plus perhaps a small amount to put toward further such productions, e.g. one in which interchurch couples speak with their own voice. Both types of videos, one with theologians speaking and one with interchurch families speaking, would be most valuable resources for us. (Note: Please contact: AAIF.co.chair@gmail.com for further details about how to acquire a copy of this DVD video.)

RAY'S COMMENTS ABOUT THE PRE AND POST CONFERENCE PLANNED GROUP OUTINGS:



Additional components of the weekend, though not part of the conference itself, were also worthwhile. How does the Chesterton rhyme go? "Wherever the Catholic sun doth shine, there's plenty of laughter and good sweet bourbon"? Oops, sorry, not quite, but appropriate enough. Fr George Kilcourse arranged a tour of the "Maker's Mark" Bourbon distillery, followed by the convent of the Sisters of Loretto, and then by the Abbey of Gethsemani (home of Thomas Merton). Wonderful places, all.

(And the small taste of bourbon was good, too!) 2008 AAIF Conference Report Submitted by Ray Temmerman, Canada

LPTS CAMPUS SUNDAY MORNING



AAIF DUES ARE NOW DUE

OUR FISCAL YEAR IS 7/1/08 – 6/30/09

For those who wish to join or renew their membership, here are the details:

All persons involved in an interchurch marriage or individuals and organizations that support interchurch families are invited to join our ministry and to actively participate –

Here are some questions to help you decide your category of membership:

FULL MEMBER – Interchurch Families: Are you planning to get married to another baptized Christian from another denomination in the near future? If you are planning to marry another baptized Christian has someone/anyone suggested as a condition of that marriage that one of you must convert? Are you struggling trying to figure out which church or churches to attend as a family? Are you trying to figure out what denomination to raise your children in? If you answered yes to any of these questions, join at this level. If your parents may have answered yes to any of these questions, join at this level. If

you have stopped going to church because you can't figure out which church to attend, join at this level.

[DUES - \\$30 PER YEAR](#)

ASSOCIATE MEMBER – These are all other parties who have an interest in supporting interchurch families. If you give pastoral care as clergy or if you are a member of the extended family who may have answered “yes” to any of the questions from the “Full Member” list above, but who will never be in an interchurch marriage yourself. Please join at this level.

[DUES - \\$25 PER YEAR](#)

THE ARK SUBSCRIPTION - The ARK is our periodic publication that includes articles of interest to interchurch families and their supporters. An attempt is made to cover all activities of local, and national interest to this group. A subscription is included in the Full & Associate memberships.

[SUBSCRIPTION - \\$10 PER YEAR](#)

Checks should be written

PAYABLE TO AAIF,

MAIL TO: AAIF

c/o Lamar Burton; 1124

Grazing Meadows La.;

Louisville, KY

40245-4594

Please let us know your name's, mailing address, church affiliation's, minor children's name's and age's, phone number's, email addresses and any interchurch families' questions you would like to see addressed in the future issues of the ARK. Please send this to:

AAIF.co.chair@gmail.com

TIME FOR ELECTIONS

Offices are held for two years. Officers can be re-elected for a second term to the same office. After that time new officers will be elected for that position.

A.A.I.F. ~ The Offices:

Co-Chair: The couple who serves as Co-Chair is responsible for the leadership of the American Association of Interchurch Families and as such, directs all activities and leads all meetings of the organization.

Vice Co-Chair: The Vice Co-Chairs are responsible for the leadership of the organization in the absence of the Co-Chairs and they will assume the role of Co-Chairs should the elected Co-Chairs not be in a position to finish their term, no longer meet the qualification to hold the office, or become temporarily incapacitated. The Vice Co-Chairs will also be available to assist the Co-Chairs on special projects, upon request.



Before and After the 2008 AAIF Conference

We took extra time to visit the backside of Churchill Downs, Bardstown, KY where we saw Heaven Hill Distillery, My Old Kentucky Home at Federal Hill where Stephen



Foster wrote his famous song, Bernheim

Research Forest and Arboretum which has a

visitor's center which won an award for its eco-friendly construction, the architecturally restored church at the convent of the



Sisters of Loretto at Nerinx, KY, the Abbey of Gethsemani at Trappist, KY where Thomas Merton is

buried, and a tour of Maker's Mark Distillery. However, it was the relaxed time together with our interchurch friends that was most precious. M.J.Glauber

TIME FOR ELECTIONS CONTINUED**A.A.I.F: The Offices continued from the previous page**

2ND Vice Co-Chair: The 2ND Vice Co-Chairs have the responsibility of performing the duties of Vice Co-Chairs and Co-Chairs in their absence and perform tasks as requested by either. In addition, the 2ND Vice Co-Chairs are responsible for soliciting nominations, qualifying nominees, and preparing a slate of officers for election each two years. The Slate of officers is then passed onto the Secretary who will implement the prescribed election process.

Secretary: The secretary shall be responsible for all written communication of the organization, the taking of any meeting minutes and the conducting of elections and the processing of ballots and the announcement of results.

Treasurer: The treasurer shall be responsible for all bookkeeping functions of AAIF, providing periodic financial reports, the collection of annual dues and subscriptions and the payment of any authorized Association expenses.

THE ELECTION PROCESS:

The 2ND Vice Co-Chair will prepare and distribute, to all members in good standing, a nomination form, listing the current office holders, their eligibility for reelection and space for nominations to each office. Each member will be asked to complete the form, by writing in their preferred nominees, and to return the form via mail to the 2ND Vice Co-Chairs by the date requested. It is planned to have a complete membership roster accompany the request for nominations. Again, it should be noted that the only eligible members for election to AAIF offices, are Full

Members. (Please send in your dues ASAP so that you can participate in this election process.)

At this point, the 2ND Vice Co-Chairs will contact the nominee for each office that had the most write-in nominations for that office, and determine their interest in standing for election to that office. If the nominees agree to have their names put forward to the membership, they will be included in the slate of nominees submitted to the Secretary for inclusion on the ballot that will be distributed to the Full Members for voting. Those ballots should be completed and returned by mail to the Secretary by the date and to the address provided on the ballot. The Secretary will then announce the results to the AAIF membership as soon as practical and new officers will assume office on July 1, 2009.

Should the nominee with the most recommendations not be interested in serving, or having their names on the slate/ballot, the 2ND Vice Co-Chairs will move to the nominee with the next most recommendations and make contact with them for the purpose of determining their willingness to serve. Should no nominee be willing to accept a particular position for the purpose of the election, then the 2ND Vice Co-Chair will advise the Co-Chair and an appropriate course of action will be determined and implemented.

Please participate. I have had great support from Father Kilcourse and Father Falardeau. I have come to the realization that my husband and I did not become an interchurch couple by accident. We have been given a purpose, and this was no accident

that we met and fell in love.

Marriage is a journey for all couples whether they are single church or interchurch couples. Things are a little more complicated for interchurch families because our gifts are often not recognized in our church communities so we are not nurtured properly. Remote marriage preparation does not address the issues of interchurch families.

Newly married interchurch couples have the potential to become truly interchurch families who nurture the spiritual lives of their spouse. Other couples simply become overwhelmed and drop out from attending any church at all. Some seek out a compromise church. Some still believe that conversion is the only option although the Vatican does not seek to convert other Christians. Setting up an interchurch home for a newly married couple or a couple who is contemplating marriage can be overwhelming. We need to give support to each other through all phases of our lives.

Please stay active in AAIF! Your insights are needed no matter at what age and stage of life you are.

Mary Jane Glauber

DANIEL OLSEN, THE 2008 AAIF KEYNOTE SPEAKER, FOUND SIX VATICAN DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT HIS FINDINGS THAT INTERCHURCH FAMILIES ARE DOMESTIC CHURCHES:

1. Pope Benedict XVI, ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER; ECUMENICAL ENCOUNTER, May 25, 2006, Warsaw, Poland
2. Vatican II, Lumen gentium, *11
3. Vatican II, Decree of the Apostolate Lay People, * 11
4. Pope Paul VI, Evangelii nuntiandi, 1975, *71
5. Pope John Paul II, Familiaris consortio, 1981, *21
6. Pope John Paul II, Familiaris consortio, 1981, *57

Please also see on the Vatican website for [The Directory For The Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism](#) #129-136, 150-151, 143-160, 159

That they may become one in your hand (Ezekiel 37:15-19, 22-24a)**Week of Prayer for
Christian Unity 2009**

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ends January 25th, but prayer for unity continues throughout the year. This fact is perhaps one of the reasons the large gatherings which marked the ecumenical spirit after Vatican II does not draw the same kind of enthusiasm today. However the Week of Prayer does not eliminate the possibility of celebrating the nine days between the Feast of the Ascension and Pentecost as is the custom in many countries of the southern hemisphere. Many opportunities to develop this theme in study groups throughout the coming year remain.

The theme was developed by a group from Korea who found in the text from Ezekiel a message for their country and our time. We might find Ezekiel's prophesy equally appropriate for our concerns. The Week of Prayer this year was celebrated in the historic setting of the inauguration of the first Afro-American President of the United States. President Barack Obama campaigned on the promise of bringing unity to our divided nation and to our divided world. Following the example of Abraham Lincoln he began his inaugural celebration with a whistle-stop train ride from Philadelphia to Washington, pausing along the way in Wilmington, Delaware and Baltimore, Maryland to speak and greet the people. In Washington he made a stirring and eloquent speech in front of the

Lincoln Memorial before thousands of enthusiastic Americans.

God wanted to unite Israel in the days of Ezekiel. We remember the vision of the dry bones which symbolized the new life which would be given to the people when they returned to the Promised Land from their exile in Babylon. In the prophesy described in Ezekiel's thirty-seventh chapter, God promises to united the divided kingdom of north and south into the single kingdom of Israel, presided over by one king, a son of David, with God holding the people in his hand.

"Mortal, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it; then take another stick and write on it,' For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with it; and join them together into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand. And when your people say to you, 'Will you not show us what you mean by these?' say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am about to take the stick of Joseph, and the tribes of Israel associated with it; and I will put the stick of Judah upon it, and make them one stick in order that they may be one in my hand," (Ezekiel 37:15-19)

**Religious and Political
Disunity**

The working group from Korea saw a necessary connection between politics and religion. God speaks through history. God acts and intervenes in human affairs to bring

salvation for his people. And so Ezekiel sees the hand of God in what happened to the people of Ancient Israel and urges the people to trust in God. This is sound and timely advice. As we pray for Christian unity we need to pray for the healing of memories and the healing of wounds inflicted in the course of history by religious divisions and wars. Our trust in God in whose hands to place ourselves and our country will serve us well in the difficult years ahead. Our new president has inherited a very difficult task as leader of the United States of America. As we pray for him, we pray for the unity of our nation, our world and all Christians.

**Father Ernest Falardeau
Ecumenical Corner
January 2009**

Father Ernie drove to the 2008 AAIF Biennial Conference in Louisville from New York City with another Ecumenist who will soon become the parent of an interchurch couple. Here he is shown taking a tour of the backside of Churchill Downs with us. - A race horse getting a bath at the backside.





AAIF Conference Feedback

<Photos from AAIF optional conference tours to the Abbey of Gethsemani, and a stained glass window from the chapel at the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.



Christian Context for What Otherwise Might Seem Ordinary

The family, marriage, work – all of our activities – are opportunities for dealing with and imitating Jesus Christ, trying to practice charity, patience, humility, diligence, integrity, cheerfulness and all the other human and Christian virtues, said Josemaría Escrivá in the 1930's in Spain. By promoting among Christians of all social classes a life fully consistent with their faith, in the middle of the ordinary circumstances of their lives and especially through the sanctification of their work, he changed the ordinary into the extraordinary. His book guides the reader through a contemplative process.

"The Christian is a child of God by virtue of baptism," he said. "Fostering among the Christian faithful a deep awareness of their being children of God, helps them act accordingly," he observed. He noted an accompanying, "simplicity in their dialogue with God" of which he approved. He saw that people

felt God's actions more closely as the children of God, and had a confidence that God will act. We call this "Divine Providence."

Through God's love for us there comes a deep awareness of the dignity of each human being and of the need for fraternity among all people, a truly Christian love for the world and for all human realities created by God, and a sense of calm and optimism.

"It is in the midst of the most material things of the earth that we must sanctify ourselves, serving God and all mankind," he wrote.

"Sanctifying work means to work with the spirit of Jesus Christ, to work competently and ethically, with the aim of loving God and serving others, and thus to sanctify the world from within, making the Gospel present in all activities whether they be outstanding or humble and hidden. In the eyes of God what matters is the love that is put into work, not its human success."

"Prayer and sacrifice are needed in order to sustain the effort to sanctify one's ordinary occupations". He wanted us to "imitate Jesus Christ... .. try to acquire a spirit of penance offering sacrifices, particularly those that help them fulfill duties faithfully and make life more pleasant for others, things like



<Photos of the award winning restoration of the sanctuary at the Loretto Community, Sisters of Loretto and an ecologically built home on their property by a Mennonite lay woman with a compost pile, & an antique gas pump from the tour of Maker's Mark Distillery that we made just after the 2008 AAIF Conference.



renouncing small pleasures, fasting, almsgiving, etc."

He promoted Christians of all social classes to a life fully consistent with their faith, in the middle of the ordinary circumstances of their lives and especially through the sanctification of their work.

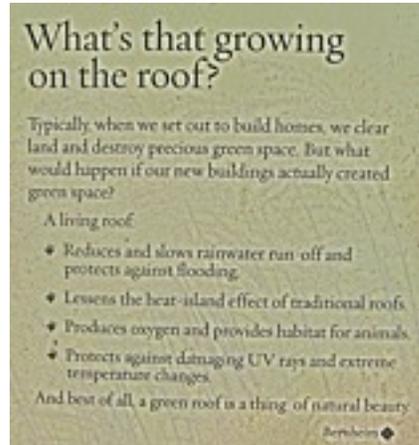
**Next AAIF Conference
Summer 2010- Please
Mark your calendars**

AAIF Conference Feedback (continued)

Christian Context for What Otherwise Might Seem Ordinary (continued from previous page)



< Photo of the Statue of The Virgin Mary at the Abbey of Gethsemani; AAIF at Bernheim Arboretum & Research Forest; Native Prairie Flowers in a meadow at Bernheim (shown in photo above)



In order to imitate Jesus Christ, he suggested “trying to acquire a spirit of penance offering sacrifices, particularly those that help them fulfill their duties faithfully and make life more pleasant for others, things like renouncing small pleasures, fasting, almsgiving, etc.

Josemaría Escrivá explained that “Christians working in the world should not live ‘a kind of double life.’ On the one hand, an interior life, a life of union with God; and on the other, a separate and distinct professional, social and family life.” On the contrary: “There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life

which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God.”

Josemaría Escrivá wrote: “Side by side with our colleagues, friends and relatives and sharing their interests, we can help them come closer to Christ.” The wish to make others know Christ, which is a direct consequence of charity (that is, the love of God above all things and of one’s neighbour as oneself), cannot be separated from the desire to contribute to finding solutions to the material needs and social problems of one’s surroundings.

It is how he wrote and how he presented his message that has made the greatest ecumenical impact for the contemplative or reflective side in all of us living in the real world trying to find that of God in all people and for those of us who are listening for the “Still Small Voice.” His writing strikes a strong chord.



< Bicycle being used on the property of the Sisters of Loretto for alternative transportation

What is Christian Charity? What does it mean to be a Christian? How should we act as Christians? As Christians we probably ask ourselves those questions from time to time, by way of a self check. That is the common bond that we have by being “interchurch.”

Before and after the 2008 AAIF Conference in Louisville, we took various tours in the area. This gave us time to be together to talk informally. The feedback for this time together was very positive.

Our situation as interchurch couples lets us reach across denominational boundaries on a regular basis. These stories are fun to share. Informally, we shared our interchurch stories, our lived experiences as Christians across denominations but well shared as interchurch families.

Christian Context for What Otherwise Might Seem Ordinary (Conference Feedback-continued from previous page)

Also, people liked sharing their own sung prayers before meals and some wished for more time for that kind of informal time at our next conference.

Both on Thursday and on Monday, we visited the Abbey of Gethsemani, where we saw a crucifix that most likely was modeled after a famous American political martyr. A statue of Mary was modeled after a Kentucky woman, perhaps suggesting that we are not so different in the way we live or should live our lives.

On Sunday afternoon, we spent some relaxed time at Bernheim Arboretum and Forest. It was intentional that there is grass growing on the visitor's center's roof. They have an award winning

eco-friendly built visitor's center. On Monday, we visited a completely eco-friendly built house on the property of the Sisters of Loretto. The Sisters had the sanctuary of their chapel done over to let in the natural light. It too was architecturally outstanding.

The Quaker Friends Center in Philadelphia has been remodeled completely "green." They ask, "Can we slow down, find our place in the divine order, and learn to live in harmony with the rest of creation?" They ask, "Does our concern for equality include equal access to clean air, clean water, food and energy?" Quakers believe that the wars of the 21st Century will be over water and energy resources.

They ask, "How can we entwine our work for peace with our work for environmental justice? Then, they ask, "Knowing what we know about how peace, equality and simplicity are connected what must we do to live with integrity? ~

One of the suggestions that came after the 2008 conference was for all of us to bring our own travel coffee mugs with us to the next conference in 2010 so that we do not have to use disposable cups. What if everyone, everywhere did that when they gathered? It is such a small gesture for each person to start taking on, that it seems almost insignificant, but if each person everywhere did that, the impact could be great for the whole of humanity. It is just a thought.

by Mary Jane Glauber

[Many thanks to Carol Natella for her technical assistance]

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Bees, Flowers, and Sassafras leaves at Bernheim Forest. photos from an outing of the 2008 AAIF Biennial Conference...It is the little things in life that make such a big impact...Please plan to join us for the 2010 AAIF Biennial Conference

