God at Work in the Losses

by Joanna Gardner

When I was first asked to write this essay, it was in my capacity as an immigration lawyer representing survivors of intimate partner violence and human trafficking at a local immigration legal services non-profit called HIAS Pennsylvania. It may sound like a loaded title, but the truth is I am absurdly new at this. I only started this job last September and I graduated from law school in May 2019. Nevertheless, for about the last four years, an intense desire to work in public interest law has been my defining purpose. The 2016 election coincided with my first year of law school and cemented my interest in immigration law. Witnessing the hateful rhetoric towards immigrants and refugees in the tumultuous months that followed enraged me and solidified my sense of purpose. My first summer internship, spent with HIAS PA’s Domestic Violence initiative, set me on a path toward representing survivors of trauma within a broken immigration system. I was thrilled when I was awarded a fellowship that would allow me to work for HIAS PA’s DV program full time. I graduated law school ready to start what I now feel is my vocation.

And then COVID-19 hit and the world turned upside down.

Our program has adapted to remote work remarkably well, but many of our clients are suffering greatly. Others have written extensively and far more eloquently than I can on the disproportionate impact of this crisis on the poor, the marginalized, and people of color. The dangerous implications of quarantine for those facing intimate partner violence have been similarly well-documented and are deeply disturbing.

But in this essay [which was written in mid-May, before the death of George Floyd and wide public protests against racism], I’d like to write a bit about the way quarantine has challenged me on a personal level. In the midst of the crisis, I have struggled profoundly with the feeling that my sense of purpose is disintegrating around me. Although there is much work to do, I don’t feel very good at my job right now. Working from home is distracting and difficult, and my adjustment to this new environment and new pace has been frustratingly slow. I am left feeling like I am not the strong advocate I thought I was. And that loss of identity has been as painful as it was unexpected. My life before quarantine was defined by my work and my sense of mission. After quarantine began, the answer to the question, “Who am I?” felt far less clear.

Several weeks into quarantine I made the decision to move home to New Jersey to be with my parents and siblings as my grandmother’s health declined. As it turned out, the timing was fortuitous. Shortly —continued on next page
after I moved home, she passed away peacefully of natural causes. It is difficult to express the enormity of the blessing of her passing away at home, surrounded by family. The fear that she would die alone in a hospital had hung over our heads like a weight for weeks. The days I had with her before she passed are a gift that I will always hold dear.

In the days that followed, friends and neighbors sent meals, leaving them in containers six feet away from our door. They stopped by to visit, reaching out with their eyes in love and sympathy through masked faces since they could not reach out with their hands. Phone calls and text messages poured in from those who could not visit. Sympathy cards and flowers flooded our mailbox. My family held a memorial over Zoom, which was strange and sad, yet oddly comforting. Her death was a profoundly painful loss, yet different from the loss I had been feeling since quarantine began—a loss of identity and purpose. Instead of a loss that left me asking, “who am I now?,” this loss brought my identity back into focus. It is a loss that, paradoxically, has filled the empty spaces left by quarantine. It has lifted up and clarified the parts of me that remain when other aspects of my identity get stripped away. And that, I believe, is because it is a loss that has left love in its wake: the aching love I feel for my grandmother; the living love we share as a family; the consoling love of friends who brought us comfort in such variety. In that love, I recognize God working like a patient gardener, gently filling the uprooted places with fresh soil.

I still love my work. I am profoundly grateful to have a job during these times and for the opportunity to serve others. I still do feel that my work is a vocation. But quarantine has made me realize that answering the question “who am I?” gets at something deeper than my work. It has forced me to look for answers to that question, not in the work that I do, but in the places where I give and receive love. My quarantine prayer has become that I might better recognize God at work in the losses this season brings and in what they leave behind.

To read more about some of the issues that Joanna raises, you can seek out the following articles:


Please remember our sick and homebound brothers and sisters, our ministry at Pennsylvania Hospital and all those who have asked for our prayers.

George Bernato, Debbie Brooks, Ann Crowther, Jane Crowther, Mary Kay Crowther, Barbara Epting, Allan May, Jerry McAndrews SJ, Owen Petzelka, Philip Press, Matthew Smith, Sara Smith, Sharon Winge and Pat Yusko.

If you wish to have someone included on the parish prayer list, please call BJ Brown at 215-923-1733 or email bjbrown@oldstjoseph.org.
The Catholic Campaign for Human Development
by BJ Brown

Catholic social teaching is sometimes said to be the church’s best kept secret. If this is true, then the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) is often buried right alongside it. This weekend, when the Archdiocese of Philadelphia holds its annual collection for CCHD, is a good time to unearth the treasures hidden in these fields.

The Campaign for Human Development was established in 1969 by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. Catholic would become part of its name later, but from the start CCHD was thoroughly Catholic, especially in the ways it brings to life the church’s social teaching in both its goals and the means of achieving them.

The overarching goal of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development is to end poverty in the United States by empowering poor people to create the changes they need.

The most significant and distinctive characteristic of a CCHD-funded organization is that it is led by, and shaped by, the communities that are most directly affected by the issues it addresses. Concretely, this means that in order to receive CCHD funding, at least half of an organization’s board of directors must be low-income. The Catholic Campaign for Human Development’s commitment to “helping people help themselves” embodies the central tenets of Catholic moral teaching: the dignity of every human person, no matter their economic or civil status, the duty to participate actively in creating just and sustainable social structures, and the critical role of communities—families, civic organizations and economic associations—in doing that.

Education is the Catholic Campaign for Human Development’s other primary goal. Not only does CCHD equip people on the margins of society with the means of shaping decisions that affect them, it educates society more broadly about the realities and persistence of poverty in the United States (for more on this, visit CCHD’s informative website povertyusa.org). In this, CCHD is also a strong practitioner of the virtue of solidarity, which strengthens the bonds of interdependence, excluding no one from a commitment to the common good.

Exactly how does the Catholic Campaign for Human Development make all this happen? CCHD is a grant making organization. In 2018–2019 (the last year for which figures are available), CCHD made 246 grants, totally $17,801,005. Grant funds come from its annual national collection. Grants are made to organizations that meet specific rigorous criteria, that are visited and reviewed by local diocesan committees who then pass their recommendations to a national review committee, whose decisions must be confirmed in turn by a committee of US bishops.

Grants fall in two broad categories: community development and economic development. Over the years, CCHD has funded a wide range of projects, including voter registration, community-run schools, minority-owned cooperatives and credit unions, for industrial development and job training programs, and rural cooperatives.

Here in Philadelphia, three community organizations have recently received funding. The Urban Tree Connection (urbantreeconnection.org) works with residents of West Philadelphia’s Haddington neighborhood to develop and sustain community-driven greening and gardening projects. The Women’s Community Revitalization Project’s fosters social and economic equity for low income women and their families by developing affordable housing and supportive services (wcrpphila.org). ChildSpace Day Care Centers (childsphacedaycarecenters.org) is a National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited worker cooperative with

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locations in Mount Airy, Germantown and West Philadelphia.

In addition to supporting national grants, each diocese retains twenty-five percent of the annual collection. This local share is disbursed by the diocese’s local CCHD committee, with the approval of the local bishop. Philadelphia’s local CCHD has funded the Providence Center (providencephilly.org), which offers educational programming in the substantially Puerto Rican and Latinx Fairhill neighborhood. The Aquinas Center (which also receives support from OSJ’s Barbelin Fund and its Advent Giving Tree) has also received CCHD funding for community education and immigration legal services.

How do you become part of the treasure and power for social change that the Catholic Campaign for Human Development represents? This year’s online collection will be open on ParishSoftGiving.com through July 19. Texting the keyword Camp4HumanDevelopment to 215-929-7151 is another way to begin the donation process.

Thank you!

Image from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops

Announcements

Prayer and Reflection for Health Care Providers in Light of the Pandemic
The St. Raphaela Center will host an hour of prayer for health care providers on Wednesday, July 15, 7:30–8:30 PM. All are welcome, with a special invitation for those serving on the front lines, ministering to the physical care of the sick. The service will consist of readings, a guided meditation, intercessory prayer and personal reflections. More information is available at straphaelacenter.org. A zoom link will be emailed after registration. Facilitators include Jacyln Newns, who led OSJ’s Advent by Candlelight celebration in December 2019, and OSJ parishioner Christine Ferrari Strickland.

Parish Conversation on Racism
A parish Zoom conversation on racism is planned for Monday, July 13 at 7:30 PM. See next week’s bulletin and the website for details.

OSJ’s Summer Bulletin
Many, many thanks to all who have shared their reflections with our parish community in bulletin essays this year (All of their essays are still available on the parish website):

Joanna Gardner, Christopher Ross, Danielle Critelli, Linda Robinson, Stephen Eberle, Nancy Bordewick, John Green, Julia Tully, Bethany Welch, Carol Hanlon, Len Mancini, Rebecca Bergh, Leo Vaccaro, Mark Dushel and Andrew Huff.

In previous years, the OSJ has taken a summer break from bulletin essays. No surprise, summer 2020 may be slightly different. Keep looking for the bulletin online each week. Whether it contains only announcements or an essay as well will vary as the circumstances seem to require. The bulletin will return in full after Labor Day weekend.

Study Participants Sought
Are you willing to help a group of Marist College stud LGBTQ+ ally development within religious and spiritual contexts.? The survey will take about 20-30 minutes. Contact office@oldstjoseph.org for a link to the online anonymous survey.
INFORMATION

Pastor
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ (pastor@oldstjoseph.org)

Parochial Vicar
Fr. Francis Hannafey SJ (fhannafey@oldstjoseph.org)

In Residence
Br. Robert Carson SJ
Fr. Ed O’Donnell SJ (eodonnell@oldstjoseph.org)

Pastoral Associate
BJ Brown (bjbrown@oldstjoseph.org)

Business Manager
Eric German (germane@oldstjoseph.org)

Director of Music
Mark Bani (music@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Offices
(office@oldstjoseph.org)

Religious Education (PREP) Coordinator
Christine Szczepanowski (prep@oldstjoseph.org)

Faith, Food & Friends Director
Deborah Hluchan (faithandfriends@oldstjoseph.org)

Director of Hospital Ministry
Tom Volkert (hospitalEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Rectory Office Hours
Monday through Friday: 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM

Mass Times
Live-streamed at 9:30 AM Sunday; at vimeo.com/osjphl.
Public Mass at 11:30 AM Sunday.

Medical Emergency
In a medical emergency when the need for a priest is urgent, please call the rectory.

Hearing Enhancements
Old St. Joseph’s is equipped with an audio hearing loop. Switch on the T-coil function of your device to use the loop. Booklets with the Sunday readings are available in the rear of the church.

Registration
Registration forms are available in the rectory office during normal office hours, on the bookcases in the back of the church and online at www.oldstjoseph.org. They can be returned to the parish office by mail or in person.

Sacrament of Reconciliation
Priests are available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation Monday through Saturday by appointment; please call the parish offices.

Sacrament of Baptism
To arrange a baptism, please contact Fr. Hannafey (fhannafey@oldstjoseph.org) at least two months before the desired date.

Eucharist for the Homebound
To arrange to receive Communion at home, please contact the parish offices.

The Sacrament of Anointing
Homebound or hospitalized persons wanting to receive the Sacrament of Anointing should call the parish office.

Sacrament of Matrimony
If you want to be married at Old St. Joseph’s, please visit our website, oldstjoseph.org and read the material under the heading Weddings. Please call the parish office at 215-923-1766 at least nine months before your desired wedding date.

Rite of Christian Initiation
If you are an adult wishing to be baptized, or to receive First Eucharist and Confirmation, or are a baptized non-Catholic seeking full communion with Catholic Church, please call the parish office or email rcia@oldstjoseph.org.

Mass of Christian Burial
To schedule a funeral or memorial Mass, ask your funeral director to call the parish office.

Parish Pastoral Council
(osjpc@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Finance Council
Paul Shay, chair

Historic Preservation Corporation Board
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ, president

Adult Education
Rita O’Brien and Jeanmarie Zippo (adulted@oldstjoseph.org)

Eldership
Pat Nelson (eldership@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Life
Joe Casey (parishlife@oldstjoseph.org)

Ignatian Spirituality and Formation
Len Mancini (osjspirituality@oldstjoseph.org)

Women, Faith and Fellowship
Rana McNamara (wff@oldstjoseph.org)

Young Adult Community
(osjyac@gmail.com)

Altar Servers
Maria Ramirez (altarserver@oldstjoseph.org)

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
Bill Stewart (EM@oldstjoseph.org)

Hospital Ministry
Luanne Balestrucci (hospitalEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Homebound Ministry
Neal Hébert (homeEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Lectors
Lou Anne Bulik (lectors@oldstjoseph.org)

Ushers
Nikola Szigorich (ushers@oldstjoseph.org)

Children’s Liturgy of the Word
Peggy Connolly (clow@oldstjoseph.org)
God Bless America

Please Continue To Pray For
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