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Get a Sacramental Life, Mr. Limbaugh On Racism and Communion

by Tom Ryan, Ph.D.

JSRI Future Activities

November 3

Fr. Fred Kammer, SJ will chair a meeting of the Board of Directors of Ignatian Solidarity Network.

November 4

Fr. Kammer will present a workshop on the scriptural roots of social justice at Holy Trinity Parish in Washington, D.C.

November 5

Fr. Kammer will present two workshops at the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice.

November 10-11

The JSRI Advisory Board will meet in New Orleans.

JSRI Recent Activities

October 19

JSRI co-sponsored a film screening of *13th* on hyper-incarceration.

October 8-11

Dr. Sue Weishar attended the Mexico City meeting of the Jesuit Network on Migration in Central America, Mexico, and the United States where she provided an overview of the migration-related work of JSRI.

I remember hearing Rush Limbaugh complain about fatigue during the Obama years. He was so disgusted with the president that he couldn't sleep; similarly, he was tired of hearing about the plight of immigrants (but probably not as tired as immigrants are of their plight!).

October 6

Dr. Weishar attended an orientation provided by Solitary Watch to the students of Dr. Ashley Howard's class on mass incarceration. Dr. Howard's students are inputting data from a statewide survey of Louisiana prisoners who have served time in solitary confinement for a report to be released later this year.

October 2

Fr. Kammer chaired a strategic planning meeting in D.C. for Ignatian Solidarity Network.

September 26

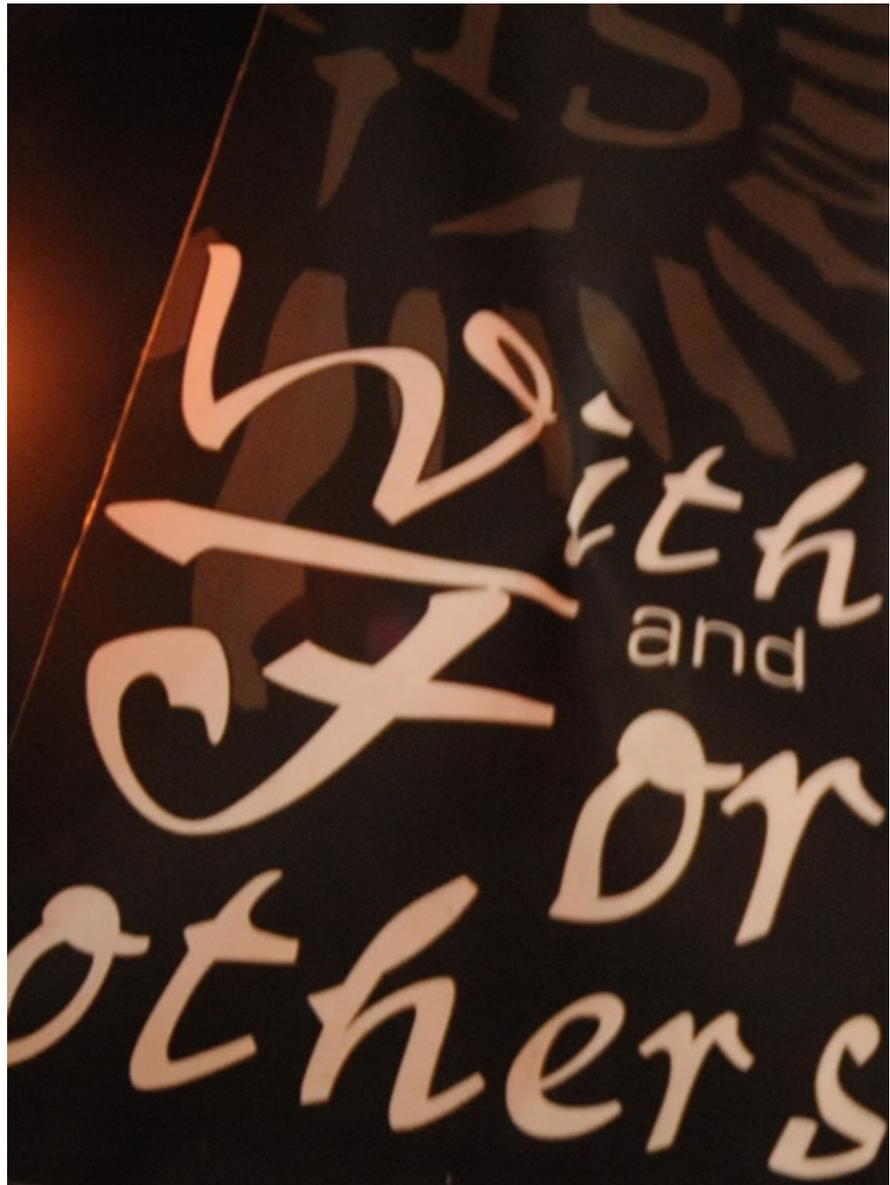
Dr. Weishar participated in a meeting of the Steering Committee of the Greater New Orleans Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition, a new organization that seeks "to co-create a more safe and just city for all people, especially those under threat, through community education and collective action."

September 19

Dr. Weishar participated in a meeting of the Board of Directors of Seashore/El Pueblo, a Biloxi nonprofit that provides services to immigrants and homeless persons on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

September 18

Three *Cafe con Ingles* service learning students and Dr. Weishar participated in a prayer vigil in front of the local ICE office for immigrant families affected by deportation. Volunteer Leslie Galvez '20 was interviewed by Telemundo at the event. *Cafe con Ingles* is an English as a second language (ESL) and community-building program co-directed by Dr. Weishar for the Latino



In response, I yelled at the radio, "Get a sacramental life, Mr. Limbaugh!" I probably should have recommended he first consult a health professional about his fatigue.

In any case, I've had similar experiences in discussions of racism. My feeling is that, of course, as a white person I'm racist or at least benefit from discrimination and prejudice in ways that African-Americans cannot. Yet, such a claim doesn't usually go over very well. People are tired of being called racist.

I find that a sacramental life eventually helps counteract such fatigue, but in the short term it may actually aggravate it.

To begin with, *communion has consequences*. The Eucharist is meant to sharpen vision and so aid communicants in discerning others and, to my mind, all creation as in some mysterious way incorporated into the Body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 11:29).

On the flip side, the Eucharist can increase fatigue because, for the discerning, it spotlights the almost innumerable ways that the Body of Christ is fragmented. It reveals sin as deep and broad.

One way that sin manifests itself is in terms of racism. We all suffer harm from discrimination and prejudice; it seems we can do nothing other than pre-judge

parishoners of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in New Orleans.

September 17

Dr. Weishar trained seven Loyola student volunteers to teach ESL with *Cafe con Ingles*.

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others. Yet what African-Americans face is not directed at some or a few; it's cooked into the system. For example, my grandparents were able to build home equity in the middle decades of the 20th century with FHA loans at the same time that FHA policies prevented African American families from doing the same, resulting in dramatic and enduring wealth (as opposed to income) gaps (see Rothstein, *The Color of Law*).

My youngest, a senior at Georgetown, and her mostly white classmates are there because 19th-century Jesuits leveraged the sale of slaves to Louisiana on behalf of the school's continued existence. I've never lived in fear of police officers; I'm privileged not to worry that my nephews will be pulled over for DWB (Driving While Black). Armed with data, I could go on and on about how I have benefited from the fruits of slavery, prejudice, and discrimination and been privileged not to suffer their harm in terms of housing, employment, schooling, incarceration, and otherwise.

Racism's systemic discrimination and prejudice deals a blow to the Body of Christ. My tolerance of it discredits the communion to which I give lip service with "Amen."

But that's not the end of the story. The Eucharist can also strengthen us along the way. The Eucharistic elements of bread and wine themselves nourish physically. Swallowed, they effect an encounter with Christ, intimately, in our very bodies. The vision of the Mystical Body of Christ, into which all creation is somehow invited, stands not just in judgment of the many ways we fracture it. It's also rhetorical; it's meant to persuade us that we are loved—unconditionally—and to allure us, to entice us toward graced action on its behalf.

So, the Eucharist is about the real. It keeps me cognizant of the manifold ways that humans and the earth suffer. It fortifies me so that fatigue doesn't lead to disregard of that reality. Yet it also offers a foretaste of the Reign of God, which will be marked by the recognition that all are created in God's image and likeness, a recognition that, fortified by Holy Communion, I will continue to try to act on and live out.

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Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans. Please send feedback to jsri@loyno.edu

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