

State of the Association

CORPUS, 2019

A noble purpose inspires sacrifice, stimulates innovation and encourages perseverance. (Gary Hamel)

CORPUS, the National Association for an Inclusive Priesthood, begins its 45th year. In our contemporary world, that's middle age! From our humble Chicago beginnings to our current status as a nationally recognized agent for change, CORPUS has always maintained that conscience and canon law is not the ultimate decider. This principle is shared throughout the progressive catholic landscape, whether the issue is to recognize the call to priestly ministry regardless of gender, marital status or sexual orientation, the full inclusion of women in all aspects of church life, recognizing and celebrating marriage equality for all, or the reaffirmation of reproductive rights.



This article serves to satisfy your constitution's requirement to report to the membership at least once a year. More importantly, this article seeks to inform, inspire, incite and energize.

Executive Council

The newly elected Executive Council of CORPUS began the year with a face-to-face meeting in Parsippany, NJ.

Anthony opened the meeting with prayer:

Blessed God, as we age, we sometimes return to the early years of our life. In our first memories of prayer, we were grateful because you chose to love us.

So, the prayer was a prayer of gratitude, deep gratitude, astonishing gratitude that the God who fashioned us and looked over us as we grew was also a God who loved us overwhelmingly.

Why would you choose to love us so endlessly?



In attendance: (left to right foreground) Andrea and Spencer Johnson (Maryland), Nick De Los Reyes (Arizona), Anthony and Theresa Padovano (New Jersey), (second row) Jim Ewens (Wisconsin), Linda Pinto, (Pennsylvania), Joe Cece (New Jersey) and Linda and Phil Marcin (Ohio). . Stu O'Brien (Massachusetts) joined us (via telephone).

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Now, considerably older in life, we have memories of how often we failed to reach the great levels of love you hoped for us.

We do not deserve what we have been given; in spite of our unworthiness we have been given you. And you are LOVE—more and greater love than we imagined we would have ever seen.

Would you now, gracious God, receive our prayer of gratitude, granted how often we showed how unworthy we could be?

We do not know why your love is so endless. Would you open your heart one more time and take in someone like us?

You are a God who does not, it seems, know how to say “no” to us. We are beginning to get a sense of what infinite is like. To be infinite is to find a way of loving more.

We know you will say “yes”. You will find a way to love us one more time even if we cannot see how you will do so.

Our meeting began with a vigorous exchange about “Why CORPUS?” Members shared their personal reasons to “stay the course”. Nick De Los Reyes created a summary for this report:

Why CORPUS?

When the new Executive Council and some colleagues met on January 25, 2019, the members asked themselves the question, Why CORPUS? Why would you continue to be involved in leadership?

The following is a synopsis of the conversation they shared.

CORPUS dramatically changed our lives. CORPUS attracted people who were forward looking and had dreams whose purpose was not in vain. It renewed our lives and gave us a vitality we did not have before. Several noted that from the first

National Conference, they felt their priesthood renewed, a fellowship with others in the same situation, and were inspired to continue some form of ministry. One noted that it was like moving from being alone at the foot of the cross to being with community on Easter.

CORPUS provides the opportunity to hope in and witness to the vision of a reformed and renewed Church taught by Vatican II, to be inclusively and collegially Catholic. Members of CORPUS have learned and affirm that our marriages allow us to be better priests and to see the face of God that celibate clerics have never experienced. CORPUS is worthy of our continued energy. We asked ourselves: Why could you not continue to be involved?

Never doubt that a small group of people can change the world. Indeed, this is how it happens.
Margaret Mead

We recall the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., in his Letter from Birmingham City Jail: Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of [people] willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right.

Membership Renewal

Thank you for the overwhelming response to our 2019 membership renewal appeal. Your kind words of support were gratifying. While our numbers are not growing, we share this dubious distinction with other organizations whose roots are in Vatican II theology. No matter what, we persist in the work of the Spirit.

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Communications

First and foremost, the issue of communication with our membership is paramount. To that aim, we examined the variety of ways that leadership can listen to our membership.

CORPUS REPORTS

CORPUS REPORTS continues to be the life-blood of our Association. From its humble roots as an 11x17 folded mailing to our current status as a national journal, CORPUS REPORTS provides theological reflections, articles on membership activity, prayer opportunities and updates on issues in the reform movement in the United States and worldwide.

One of the most recent challenges we face is the way CORPUS REPORTS is delivered. In January, 2018, CORPUS REPORTS became available on-line. Members were asked to choose whether they wanted a paper edition or an electronic edition. In the transition, we encountered some issues. Some members did not respond to this request and thus, received an electronic version.

The email version is sent through Constant Contact. As there are no set dates for distribution electronically, members needed to be vigilant in checking their email (sometimes sent to promotional or spam folders due to the mass mailing). This has unfortunately resulted in many members not receiving their CORPUS REPORTS.

To remedy this challenge, this current issue is being sent to ALL members of CORPUS. We ask you:

* If you currently receive CORPUS REPORTS in paper form through the US Post Office and wish to continue in this manner, you do not need to respond in any way

* If you do not receive CORPUS REPORTS in paper form through the US Post Office but would like to,

please fill out the coupon on the back page and mail it to CORPUS, 187 Eastwood Drive, Shohola, PA 18458 or send an email to corpususa@gmail.com. Please use CORPUS REPORTS in the subject line of the email.

* If you currently receive CORPUS REPORTS digitally only and wish to continue to do so, you need not respond in any way.

Website

The CORPUS website is a vibrant, organic way to be part of all things CORPUS. Joe Cece provides layers and layers of information and resources. You can see updates on CORPUS business; become informed of contemporary initiatives which are underway to bring about true reform in the church; keep pace with issues in church reform; enjoy seasonal religious reflections through E-catholicism; review past articles in CORPUS REPORTS; or request prayer support.

CORPUS Blog

One of the most prolific ways to be informed of contemporary news, opinions, events or theological updates is through the CORPUS Blog. Stu O'Brien manages this vibrant ministry providing links to articles from a variety of cutting-edge sources (The Tablet, National Catholic Reporter, Washington Post, Crux, Catholic News Service, etc.). You can connect with this service in a number of ways:

1. Go to our website (www.corpus.org). Click on the blue button on the left-hand side "CORPUS Blog". You will find daily listings of all the "gospel news" of the progressive catholic reform movement.
2. Type in: corpusblog@blogspot.com. It will take you to the current issue.

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e-CORPUS

This is a weekly summary of catholic news, opinions and traditions. The focus is on ministry and church reform. If you have given us your email address, you should receive notices weekly highlighting the most popular articles. If you are not receiving e-corporus, go to www.corpus.org and click on the e-corporus link. Contact Stu O'Brien with any questions (sobrien6431@me.com)

NOTE: In the past, CORPUS REPORTS provided similar articles but were dated. Now the Blog and e-CORPUS provide the same resources in real time!

e-Catholicism

This is a weekly internet mailing that reflects traditional catholic themes. This site offers up-to-date and current information regarding the Church's interaction with the modern world, politics and society. Besides being a resource for information, e-Catholicism.org will also try to reflect the many ways the Church proclaims the Good News, serving as a witness to the Saving Power of our God and re-affirming the Presence of God to a world which desperately needs to hear the Gospel message. Go to www.corpus.org and click on the e-Catholicism button located on the left-hand bar.

Conferences

Our first national conference (Washington, DC 1988) set the standard for annual gatherings of the CORPUS community. Evaluations consistently reveal that the two most important results of these gatherings are the presentations and the chance to meet other members of CORPUS. Ultimately, age and expense demand that we must discontinue this practice. But technology offers us an opportunity. CORPUS subscribes to ZOOM. This is an internet gathering place where participants can see and listen to each other.

On Sunday, April 28th at 4:00 pm, Nick De Los Reyes will be our guest presenter and give a brief reflection on Easter. After that, there is a period for participants to share views and comments. If you would like to participate in this conference, please send an email to corpususa@gmail.com. Use the word "conferences" in the subject line. Additional conferences will be scheduled for May and June. These will be announced on our website.

PARTNERSHIPS

Catholic Organizations for Renewal (COR)

Twenty-six years ago, CORPUS was part of a unique partnership. Catholic Organizations for Renewal is a coalition of over fifteen agencies working on a variety of issues. These include: Association for the Rights of Catholic in the Church (ARCC); Call To Action; Catholics for Choice; DignityUSA; Ecumenical Catholic Communion; FutureChurch; New Ways Ministries; Pax Christi (Maine); Quixote Center; RAPPORT; Roman Catholic Womenpriests; Southeast Pennsylvania Women's Ordination (SEPA/WOC); Women's Ordination Conference (WOC); Women-Church Convergence (WCC).

We gather twice a year but work in partnership regularly on a variety of initiatives. Collectively, we recently sent a letter to Cardinal Blase Cupich in advance of his meeting in Rome regarding the clergy abuse crisis. We partner with a number of other organizations supporting their advocacy work. We begin each meeting with an update of activities and their importance in the progressive catholic reform movement.

We regularly schedule an educational component. Catholics for Choice conducted a training on how to speak effectively with the media. Michelle Dillon, author of *The Euphemization of Power* in the Catholic Church led us in an examination of language and how church officials mask the truth. An example is the church's position that they cannot change and allow women to be ordained. But, they can demand that we quietly accept this so-called teaching.

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The most poignant example is the use of the term “clergy sexual abuse” when we are actually talking about rape of children. Theologians Jamie Manson and Sheila Briggs examined complementarity and how its use by the church is pointed at keeping women in their place.

This spring Tom Doyle will join us to examine strategies given the evolving situation over clergy sexual abuse of children..

Several of our partnering organizations offer monthly web based seminars. This opportunity provides members not only with cutting edge thought, but also the opportunity to discuss opinions and positions with others. Check out the COR section of CORPUS’ website for more information.

We Are Church:USA

Several members of COR also belong to We Are Church:USA. Since 1995, we have joined with the global effort at reform (www.we-are-church.org) who work together globally on church reform issues. Their website is rich with connections with reform issues worldwide. Colm Holmes is the chair. You can find his reflections on page 13.

Federation of Christian Ministries

CORPUS has applied for and been accepted as a community member of FCM. We have long shared common roots dating back to the early 1970’s. This partnership allows members of CORPUS to enjoy the resources of FCM. One of them is their monthly newsletter. A link to it is found on the CORPUS website.

Women Church-Convergence

CORPUS is also a member of Women Church-Convergence (W-CC), a coalition of 28 autonomous Catholic-rooted groups working to build just social and ecclesial structures with shared power for everyone, especially women and those whom church and society marginalize.

Women-Church Convergence amplifies diverse feminist, faith-filled voices and can create spaces in which all can live out their vision of full inclusion in church and society. CORPUS will be represented at their meeting held in Philadelphia.

Members will be part of a public panel held at Swarthmore College. The program is entitled “How equality can flourish in a multi-cultural, multi-generational, multi-racial, multi-national church?”

Call To Action 2019 Re/Generation Mentorship Program

Zachary Johnson, Executive Director of Call to Action, has transformed the former 20/30 group into a Re/Generation initiative. This invites twelve young individuals to journey together for a period of time to discern their vocation to change within our church. CORPUS has been invited to be an “elder mentor” for this program. This means that one of the new class will be paired with a member of CORPUS to share thoughts, ideas, and experiences.



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ADVOCACY

Cardinal Cupich letter

Together with ten other organizations of COR, a pastoral letter was sent to Cardinal Blase Cupich in advance of his trip to Rome for the summit on the clergy sexual abuse crisis. While a formal response was not forthcoming, we watched closely as he showed some courage and fortitude in spite of the lack of progress.

Archbishop McCarrick New York Times Letter

The unfortunate, but long overdue, public humiliation of Archbishop McCarrick has resurrected a painful issue for CORPUS members. That issue, formerly known as laicization, is now termed “defrocking”. No matter what the term, it is abhorrent language which insults the people of God. It further reinforces clericalism in all its ugliness. It especially conjures up CORPUS members experience when they simply asked to be allowed to remain in ministry but also marry. The church’s immediate response was “defrocking”. What is the church’s rationale for levying this sanction on men who just wish to follow their God-given vocation to marry and raise a family?

A *Letter to the Editor* was crafted and sent to every news organization (for example, New York Times, Washington Post, National Catholic Reporter) whenever they dealt with the issue.

We will continue to raise this issue wherever and whenever possible.

Directory

Our recent membership appeal initiative updated members’ contact information. We are working on placing a Directory on our website in early May. **Please contact us if you do not want your contact information published.**

Ordination Day Witness

Annually, Phil and Linda Marcin stand in front of the Columbus cathedral when ordinations are scheduled. They have been faithfully witnessing to the validity of a married priest for over thirty years.

We encourage you to send information about CORPUS activities in your area.



May 1995



May 2018