



National priests' association to meet in Baltimore June 20-23

June 14 • For immediate release

The Association of U.S. Catholic Priests will conduct its annual assembly at the Maritime Conference Center near Baltimore, June 20-23, on the theme, Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future. Cardinal Wilton Gregory, Archbishop of Washington, will preside at the assembly Mass, Wednesday evening, June 22.

#### **SPEAKERS**

Keynote speakers include Cardinal Peter Turkson, new chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences; Mary Novak, executive director of the NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice; Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv. of Lexington; and Franciscan Father Dan Horan, Director of the Center for Spirituality at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Ind.

- **Bishop Stowe**, a member of the AUSCP, is in favor of the pending Equality Act; he was quoted as saying "It is our duty to love and defend" LGBTQ Americans. *Monday evening, June 20: Fratelli Tutti: The Magisterium of Pope Francis and Its Challenge for the U.S. Church*

- **Dan Horan** is a Franciscan Friar, author, speaker and NCR columnist. His latest book is *A White Catholic's Guide to Racism and Privilege*. *Tuesday morning, June 21: Dreaming with the Spirit: Theological Imagination and the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry Today*

- At NETWORK, **Mary Novak** succeeds Sister Simone Campbell, SSS (who also has been a keynote speaker and contemplative guide for the AUSCP). Novak is a lawyer, educator, chaplain and spiritual director, restorative justice practitioner, and activist who has worked in Catholic contexts for decades. *Wednesday morning, June 22: Decenter and Transcend: A Priesthood for the Healing of our Church and World*

- Ghanaian **Cardinal Turkson** was recently in the news, telling reporters that President Biden should not be denied Communion. *Wednesday afternoon, June 22: Renewing the Spirit of Vatican II is Essential to our Path to the Future*.

- Sr. Michelle Stachowiak, CSSF, will serve as contemplative guide for participants as they reflect and react to the keynotes. She is a native of Buffalo, New York, and a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice (Felician Sisters). She is on the staff of LCWR where she currently serves as Associate Director for Mission Collaboration.

The AUSCP Assembly will begin June 20, with a day retreat led by Father Scott Detisch, a priest of the Diocese of Erie. Detisch is the author of *From Hero to Servant to Mystic: Navigating the Deeper Waters of Priestly Spirituality*.

### **POPE ST. JOHN XXIII AWARDS**

The AUSCP will present its prestigious Pope St. John XXIII Award to three individuals, a grandmother with a lifetime ministry in parish and community, a pastor who welcomes immigrants and LGBTQ Catholics, and the co-founder of New Ways Ministry.

**Cathy McClain**, mother of a blended family of four and grandmother of five, has been a part of St. Veronica Parish in Baltimore since she became a convert at age 10. In addition to her numerous parish commitments, she managed a nonprofit for 26 years and focused on reducing violent crime in the Cherry Hill community. She has organized a summer camp for the past 32 years to combat learning loss during the summer as well as an annual prayer walk to consecrate the grounds where murders have taken place. She wrote a grant to establish the Safe Streets program in Cherry Hill.

**Rev. Joseph Muth** is the recently retired pastor of St. Matthew Parish in Baltimore which has welcomed folks from 45 different countries, mostly immigrants and refugees. Since 2000, the parish-sponsored Immigration Outreach Service Center assists people with political asylum, status adjustment and family reunification. The parish also has an outreach to the Muslim community and welcomes LGBTQ Catholics. His mantra for ministry is "Come on in, we can figure it out together."

**Sister Jeannine Gramick** celebrated 50 years of ministry with LGBT people that has transformed the Catholic Church in the United States and beyond. In 1977, she and co-founder Father Robert Nugent established New Ways Ministry, an international Catholic ministry of justice and reconciliation for LGBT Catholics and the wider Church. She has weathered a Vatican investigation, dismissal from her initial religious community, and criticism, condemnation and rejection from many quarters. Last December, a handwritten letter in Spanish from Pope Francis described her "closeness, compassion and tenderness" in ministry as being in "the style of God."

### **AUSCP TAKES ACTION**

Among recent, notable activities, The AUSCP has joined with the Catholic Committee of the South urging synodal participation, has sought to win church approval for a new liturgical text focused on Gospel Non-Violence, condemned racism and white supremacy, assisted and supported priests whose legal rights may be misunderstood or threatened, and supported the unbiased reporting of Catholic News Service and asked the U.S. bishops to keep New York and Washington news bureaus active.

The Mutual Support Committee of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests prepared a document delineating the rights of priests, mailed to every priest, diocesan and religious, in the United States. Along with it was a wallet card summarizing the rights of a priest as defined by Canon Law.

The AUSCP in 2021 established "Gospel Non-Violence" as a top priority for action over the next three years, and following the recent school shooting in Texas, called for "legislative solutions, executive action and judicial approval of measures to stem gun violence in the individual states and at the federal level."

In January 2022, the AUSCP announced support for a statement of Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Archbishop Wester is Episcopal Consultor for the AUSCP.

### **TOWARD THE FUTURE**

AUSCP members engage in various working groups, including Immigration, Climate Crisis, Mutual Support and Women's Issues, all originating from previous assemblies or proposed by the leadership team.

Three issues were chosen in 2021 as priorities: Vatican II, Gospel Non-Violence, and Anti-racism, and the three priority groups will have informational presentations regarding issues and actions into the future.

**The Vatican II working group** proposes three teachings of council to give such direction to the mission and work of the AUSCP: the Church as "People of God," seeking synodality that "listens to the input of all people and discerns the movement of the Spirit in the Church and World; religious freedom which includes unhindered practice of faith and precludes imposition of beliefs and practices on others; and the Church in the Present World, a commitment "to becoming living witnesses in word and deed to truth and freedom, peace and justice."

**The Gospel Non-Violence working group** calls on AUSCP members to join Pax Christi and the wider Catholic community in the practice of Gospel nonviolent peacemaking. The three-part plan calls for "a genuine commitment on the part of AUSCP members to re-educate themselves through prayerful study;" shared action such "more frequent, courageous, and prophetic preaching about Gospel Nonviolence on the part of AUSCP members;" and a third stage to be flow from the experience of the study and action, such as initiating "a process of formation and advocacy" with justice and peace groups, parish leaders and others.

**The Anti-Racism working group** presents a strategic plan to "Acknowledge and Address Racism Within Oneself" for the first year, "Acknowledge and Address the Sin of Racism in our Church" in the second year and, for the third year, "Dismantle Structural and Deeply Systemic Racism in our American Society."

*For comment or more information*

Rev. Greg Barras, Leadership Team Chair, [gregmbarras@gmail.com](mailto:gregmbarras@gmail.com)

Rev. Michael Bausch, Leadership Team Co-Chair, [Michael.bausch@dor.org](mailto:Michael.bausch@dor.org)

Rev. Stephen Newton, CSC, Executive Director, [auscpexdir@gmail.com](mailto:auscpexdir@gmail.com)

Sister Jackie Doepker, OSF, Executive Secretary, [office@auscp.org](mailto:office@auscp.org)

Paul Leingang, AUSCP Communications, [auscp.communications@gmail.com](mailto:auscp.communications@gmail.com)