By Kirk O. Hanson

Americans are engaged in a national debate about ethics. We recoil from some behaviors of our government leaders; we debate whether our own bishops have acted ethically in their handling of abuse cases; we agonize over the question of whether a “youthful indiscretion” by a Supreme Court candidate is disqualifying. We are particularly troubled by a worldwide mood that is less compassionate toward refugees and immigrants, but are perplexed ourselves about the precise balance of welcoming immigrants and protection of our borders required by ethics.

What is Ethics?

What is ethics then? How do we identify standards of ethical behavior that can guide our own decisions and those of our congregations and organizations? And how do we use these ethical standards when we confront personal decisions and policy choices, as well as social and economic patterns we consider unjust?

Ethics is the identification and use of moral standards of behavior to guide our decisions and actions. Ethical standards are those that promote human welfare, though we must recognize that not
Everyone will agree on how to define human welfare. Some will say being free—free of government coercion and taxation—is the definition of human welfare. Others would say having basic food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, and the freedom to practice one’s religion is the core of human welfare. Even if we agree on a definition of human welfare, we may disagree on the most effective policies and actions to achieve that condition. And we can disagree over whether it is our specific obligation to try to address a particular need.

Ethics is also the study of standards of behavior that apply to each of us in the particular roles we play in life. I may have specific ethical obligations as a teacher that others do not have. A bishop may have ethical obligations to the faithful in a particular diocese that another bishop or layperson does not have. A doctor working in a hospital may have an ethical obligation to serve that institution and its patients that transcends her belief that she also has an ethical obligation to serve those in Africa with no access to health care.

**What Ethics is Not**

To define ethical standards that serve human welfare, let’s first dispose of what ethics is NOT.

- Ethics is not just what makes us feel good, though ethical action will indeed sometimes give us good feelings. Similarly, situations which makes us feel uncomfortable are not always an indication that there is an ethical wrong or that we must act to alleviate the situation.

- Ethics is also not just religion, though most religions do advocate high ethical standards. Despite those standards, however, religions do not always equip us well for the distinctively modern ethical choices we face.

- Ethics is certainly not just following the law or culturally-accepted norms. Law lags behind and sometimes frustrates important ethical standards; some cultures enshrine racism, sexism, and ethnic hatred in their laws.

- Ethics is also not science; the fact that we can do something does not mean we should do it. Advances in biotechnology and artificial intelligence are wonders, but some could also be horrors.

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**“Ethics is the identification and use of moral standards of behavior to guide our decisions and actions.”**

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To act ethically, we have two major tasks. The first is to define our own ethical principles and standards—and the second is to do the hard work of applying those principles and standards to often very complex situations.

**Sources of Ethical Principles**

Catholics study the ethical sayings of Jesus and the authors of the scriptures for ethical principles. However, as noted before, these and other authoritative sources must be interpreted and applied in the context of the society in which we live today. We also can and should study how humans throughout history—both the learned and the less sophisticated—have answered the question “how shall we live.” Our thoughtful forebears have identified five standards for ethical behavior. These are:

- **The Utilitarian Standard.** The most common sense answer to what is ethical is that which enhances human welfare most, assuming we can agree on what human welfare is and what increases it. Few actions have only good or only bad effects, however, so we are usually seeking the action whose positive effects on human welfare are greatest and whose negative effects are least. The ethics of warfare and humanitarian intervention struggle with this balance every time an intervention is proposed. Should the United States invade Syria? Should we have sent US troops into Rwanda to stop genocide?

- **The Rights Approach.** Much of modern ethics has been built on the concept of human rights, those “rights” every human being should enjoy simply because they are human. In 1946, a committee led by Eleanor Roosevelt wrote the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, an extraordinary document that has served our global world well. Yet even this document is criticized by some. It mixes negative rights (don’t imprison me unjustly) with positive rights (I have a right to food, clothing, shelter). Every person has a duty not to violate my negative rights, but who has the responsibility to provide me with adequate food and health care?

- **The Fairness or Justice Approach.** From the Greeks forward, a principle of justice has been a core idea of ethics: human beings ought to be treated equally, or if not equally, then by some standard of deference we recognize as “fair.” We embrace the idea that some employees may be paid more than others, but we may simultaneously believe in a minimum wage. We may embrace a standard of “social justice” that demands equal access to health care. We may believe in a justice standard known as “preferential option for the poor” that would require every social structure to favor the poorest and least advantaged. Others may believe in a fairness standard that rejects affirmative action and rigorously enforces equal treatment.

- **The Common Good Approach.** Greek philosophers also contributed the ethical principle that life in community is part of human welfare, though they limited access to males and “citizens.”
A Framework for Ethical Decision Making

**Recognize an Ethical Issue**

1. Could this decision or situation be damaging to someone or to some group? Does this decision involve a choice between a good and a bad alternative, or perhaps between two “goods” or between two “bads”?
2. Is this issue about more than what is legal or what is most efficient? If so, how?

**Get the Facts**

3. What are the relevant facts of the case? What facts are not known? Can I learn more about the situation? Do I know enough to make a decision?
4. What individuals and groups have an important stake in the outcome? Are some concerns more important? Why?
5. What are the options for acting? Have all the relevant persons and groups been consulted? Have I identified creative options?

**Evaluate Alternative Actions**

6. Evaluate the options by asking the following questions:
   - Which option will produce the most good and do the least harm? (*The Utilitarian Approach*)
   - Which option best respects the rights of all who have a stake? (*The Rights Approach*)
   - Which option treats people equally or proportionately? (*The Justice Approach*)
   - Which option best serves the community as a whole, not just some members? (*The Common Good Approach*)
   - Which option leads me to act as the sort of person I want to be? (*The Virtue Approach*)

**Make a Decision and Test It**

7. Considering all these approaches, which option best addresses the situation?
8. If I told someone I respect — or told a television audience — which option I have chosen, what would they say?

**Act and Reflect on the Outcome**

9. How can my decision be implemented with the greatest care and attention to the concerns of all stakeholders?
10. How did my decision turn out and what have I learned from this specific situation?

Source: Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University

Catholic philosophers have advocated an ethical concept of the common good that recognizes that society needs conditions—in the local community, the nation state, even the global community—that enhance the welfare of all. Among the goods often included in the common good are the rule of law, effective and nondiscriminatory policing, a public educational system, and so on. Actions which contribute to and enhance the quality of these common goods are seen as ethical.

*The Virtues Approach.* One of the most ancient approaches to ethics has been to define the virtues or behaviors which are considered to meet the highest ideals of human existence, of our humanity. These virtues are dispositions or habits which lead individuals to “do the right thing” even in the face of pressure to do otherwise. Philosophers often have slightly different lists of these core virtues, but among them are honesty, courage, compassion, generosity, tolerance, love, fidelity, fairness, self-control, and prudence. An ethical action is one that hews most closely to these virtues. The problem, of course, is that the virtues sometimes will conflict in particular situations. It may be impossible to be generous to all, or at times compassion may conflict with equal treatment.

**Making Ethical Choices**

“Doing ethics” requires the hard work of understanding our own set of ethical values and principles, drawn from all of these sources, as well as Scriptures and from our Catholic tradition of theological ethics. This is a task not just for each of us individually, but also for our congregations and institutions and communities. We talk about the values and charisms of our congregations, the values and mission of Catholic schools and colleges and social institutions. Today, we are even talking about the ethical values of businesses and of local villages. Built into the culture of every organization or community is a set of ethical values which guide its behavior.
In confronting any particular ethical choice, an individual decision-maker or a congregation will draw on its many ethical principles and values. It often takes time and deep discernment to identify how several ethical principles and values apply to a particular choice. And people of good will can disagree, both because how they prioritize their values may not be exactly the same, but also because they disagree on what effects a particular policy or action will produce. Will a demonstration on behalf of an oppressed minority turn violent? Will the demonstration lead the government to change its policy, or instead to double down on its repression?

As hinted earlier, how one defines their “role” will also have an impact on how they resolve ethical dilemmas. If I define my role as a teacher to be limited to doing my best in the classroom, I may believe I should not engage my students in discussions of their personal problems. If I have a more expansive view of my teaching role, I may believe I should be a mentor in all things to my students. How I define my role as a father may influence how much I do for my own family versus how much I do philanthropically for the poor in my community.

“Doing Ethics” is complex and not for the bystander. Doing ethics well is critical to our increasingly complex world and to the communities to which we belong.

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Additional resources and writings on each of the five approaches to defining ethical standards, can be found at: https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/
I wanted to feel that I had done good work. And I knew that the experience would help me better understand the world, poverty, injustice.

Indeed it has. And, arguably, good work was done. But I was never meant to be a voice for the voiceless. And it is our misuse of this expression that points to the underlying issue at stake as we reflect upon who counts in decision making in the development sector. All people have a voice; all people have opinions. It is not for us to speak for others, but rather, to listen to them—and to amplify their voices.

I don't know how we decided to build that singular house, how that family was identified. But I do know that in my experience we see an example of a larger issue. For me, a university decided that a particular family was to receive a house. It was to be done for the benefit of that family and the formation of a bunch of college kids. These white folks swooped in one afternoon with some tools and good intentions, busied themselves until they were out of time, and left.

Now, amplify that. To every “poor” community around the world. How easy it is for us to sit as armchair philanthropists. We want to feel good about the impact that we can see, feel, touch. We all want the equivalent of those photos with hammers and children.

And this can happen in development work just as easily as it can happen on a service trip. It’s easier to build a well because we can say we did. We can count it, put it on a report. But what if that community doesn’t know how to work a well? What if they didn’t really need one in the first place? What if, over time, that well rusts, breaks down, becomes obsolete? Our report says we did good, but that community is no better off.

Catholic social teaching calls us to subsidiarity. It’s quite a simple concept, really: Those who are closest to a problem are the best ones to articulate the most workable solutions.

So, who counts in ethical decision making? Well, if it’s your community, you count. Or at least, you should. But how to ensure that you do, especially in highly competitive international development work?

At CRS, Catholic social teaching is baked into our programming. But even more than that, CRS’ work is a constant reflection of what Pope Paul VI called us to in Populorum Progressio: integral human development.

Full college courses are taught on the subject but at its simplest, integral human development demands that, when we engage with a community, we do so holistically, taking stock first and foremost of that community’s assets and strengths.

It’s hard to deem someone voiceless and to recognize their strengths simultaneously. Something must give. Because when decisions are made for people—irrespective of what strengths can be brought to the table—voices are necessarily cast to the side. And when that happens, houses, wells and all manners of well-intentioned development projects occur without an adequate understanding of the true needs—and the true assets—of the community in question.

An example: CRS, in partnership with Lumos and Maestral International, is working to keep families together. We’re on a quest to transform well-meaning institutions—now known as orphanages—into dynamic, community-based centers for care and family support.

The project is called Changing the Way We Care, and through it we’re reminded of an unsettling truth: 80% of children who reside in orphanages have a living parent. How did this happen when orphanages are meant to be safe havens for orphans?

Orphanages—and the funding they receive—are not necessarily established with the best interests of local community members in mind. Indeed, orphanages are sustained because we—the donors—want to help children—a worthy cause, to be sure. But we don’t know the local context. We don’t know...
that extreme poverty drives hard-working parents to give one or more of their children to orphanages simply because the orphanage can guarantee hot meals and an education when the parents cannot. And for parents of children with disabilities, orphanages may seem like the only option—how can a parent expect to provide for a disabled child when they can hardly provide for themselves, the reasoning may go.

The ultimate impact? Children are separated from their parents, their families, because this is the “better” option. Of course, the true “better” option—the best, in fact—is for children to remain with their families. Children learn and develop better when they are in their home environment. And so, we need to ask these hard questions: Does this model work for you, the parent? Is this what you really want?

The answer? Likely not. But without asking the question, without bringing the true stakeholders into the conversation, we don’t hear the answer. We inadvertently harm the children we so desperately want to help. And we tear apart their families in the process.

Now, again, amplify that. How many other development issues demand such challenging questions? In such situations, do we want to be the voice for the voiceless? Or should we let the supposed voiceless answer the question for themselves? In this and many situations, we’re better off just listening.

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Discernment in Decision Making

By Matt Barmore

Each of us makes hundreds of decisions every day: decisions about what to have for breakfast, what to wear, how to spend our free time. These decisions don’t require much thought and don’t leave us fretting about whether we’ve made the “right” decision. But at various times in our lives, we face decisions that do have a significant impact on our lives—decisions about whether to take a particular job, whether to start or continue a personal relationship, how to respond to social or political concerns. When faced with these decisions, Ignatian discernment can be a powerful tool.

Engaging in Ignatian discernment is helpful in two important ways. First, it helps us eliminate those things that clutter our ability to see clearly. Second, it can help us get in touch with our deepest self, and when our actions align with our core identity, we are both
more confident in our actions and more at peace.

Ignatian discernment begins with prayer. I pray first to understand what God is calling me to do, which is another way of praying to understand my deepest desires. Psalm 139 tells us that God “knit me in my mother’s womb.” When I’m most in touch with that divine tapestry, my actions reflect my inner desires.

On a more concrete level, Ignatian discernment involves praying for indifference. By indifference, Ignatius meant the ability to recognize and suspend the trappings, fears, and “inner leanings” that often hinder our ability to make the best choice. Trappings are things like wealth, power, and prestige that cloud our judgment. For example, about 20 years ago, I was offered a job as the principal at the Jesuit high school in Seattle. I was teaching at the Jesuit high school in San Francisco, and as I prayed for indifference, it became clear to me that I was not ready to make a decision. Sometimes the decision is obvious and requires little or no more work. For me, what had been a very anxious decision about whether to take the job as principal became a relatively easy and natural decision after praying for indifference. I felt comfortable that I was taking the job for the right reasons.

For those times when the decision is not obvious, for instance, when faced with an ethical dilemma, Ignatius offers two methods to help make the right choice—one practical and concrete, the other creative and imaginative. The concrete method involves making lists. Make a list of all of the positives and negatives associated with Choice A. Then, do the same with choice B. The purpose of creating lists is not to quantify the choices. Rather, making lists can help us evaluate the relative strengths of one value in relationship with another. For example, the woman deciding whether or not to quit her job noted that one of the positives of quitting her job was that she’d be able to spend more time with her husband who had some health problems. Creating the lists helped her see more clearly that helping her husband was a higher priority.

For those not drawn to list-making, Ignatian discernment offers another method. Imagine having chosen one of the options and reflect on some questions: “What do you like/dislike about the choice you’ve made?” “What does it feel like to have made this choice?” For the woman in the example above, using the imagination was the “kicker.” I asked her to imagine how she’d feel three weeks after leaving her job. She had a very clear sense that the guilt she would inevitably feel at first would be replaced by relief and joy at being able to tend to those things that give her more life.

The discernment process outlined above does not always lead to clear answers. Nor does it mean we won’t sometimes make choices that don’t turn out well. The purpose of Ignatian discernment is to help us get in touch with our deepest desires and make decisions rooted in that self. When we do that, even on those occasions when things don’t turn out as well as they could, we can experience a sense of peace and purpose that inform and make easier the future decisions we will face.
How do we decide what course of action to take? How do we know what considerations to bring to the making of a decision? How do we know what’s right? On what basis do we judge what is wrong? Are wrong and right the only categories? What other concerns should we have that we may not yet even know to take into account?” These and countless others are the questions that frequently emerge in the hearts of those who grapple with ethical decision-making today; such are also the musings that have been voiced by Catholic theologians who have contemplated ethical issues over the centuries.

Traditionally, Catholic theology has taken a variety of approaches, too many to explore fully here. Broadly, however, we might note a legacy—founded on an appeal to moral laws, norms, principles, and rules—that bids us take into account (1) the act itself, (2) its intention, and (3) the likely consequences on the human relationships that are involved. Thus, Catholics have become very familiar with debates—especially in the public and political forum—on the extent to which a given act constitutes a direct, or indirect, or remote cooperation with evil. This approach focuses principally on the assessment of guilt (or guiltlessness) associated with an act.

**Virtue Ethics**

From Thomas Aquinas we inherit another approach, that of virtue ethics. God’s hopes for each of us, upon calling us into being, is the fullest possible flourishing of our human self. Aquinas, following Aristotle, saw virtues as “perfections” of our natural capacities, so that as we “become builders by building and lyre players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.” Virtue ethics argues that morality is as much about who we are as about what we do. As Brian Berry notes, “Who we are extends into what we do and do not do, and what we do and do not do shapes the kind of persons we become.” Virtue ethics, therefore, involves the process of first becoming aware of the virtues present but not fully formed in our nature, and then working more and more to make them manifest in our lives. This approach asks of us that, upon confronting an ethical dilemma, we always choose the course of action that is most likely to shape us toward the moral perfection that is God’s desire for us. The focus here is on allowing our decision-making process to grow us into that which we are meant to be.

**Biblical Spirituality**

Another vital legacy at our disposal is, of course, the treasure of biblical spirituality. Following the urging of Vatican II (1962-1965), theologians have directed attention toward...
the rich content of Sacred Scripture, particularly the way in which the narratives of the ancient Israelites and the New Testament authors inform our knowledge of what they believed about themselves, their communities, and their world.\(^2\) This is meaty work: complex, sometimes involving opposing viewpoints, and defying easy categorization.\(^3\) Let’s use the Gospel of Luke as a case in point.

The Gospel’s prologue, for example, resounds with long-standing Old Testament themes of justice: Mary and Elizabeth are portrayed as having the faith, resilience and courage typical of strong, Israelite women; Mary’s Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), proclaimed while pregnant with Jesus, reprises the Isaian portrayal of Jesus. A woman uses what we might call a back door approach to appeal for a judge to reach a verdict in her favor in the matter that will shortly come before him. At first glance, we might disapprove of her circumventing the process. However, Jesus’ tale is clear: As a widow, she has lost the only—male—voice that can speak for her in the public forum. She is voiceless, and her interests risk being utterly disregarded by a judge with a reputation for harshness. So she is relentless. In pursuit of the justice, the hearing, that is properly hers, she doggedly pursues the judge by the means available to her (and we note that there is no violence; there are no threats; just tireless, unceasing persistence), and wears him down. In Jesus’ parable it is not the judge’s virtue that brings about the right decision, it is the widow’s single-minded pursuit of justice. Again, the Gospel asserts the priority of the claims of the voiceless, the disregarded, and the marginalized, and extols the tenacity of those who present themselves as advocates on their behalf.

The parable of the two brothers (Luke 15:11-32) perhaps provides us with a helpful final perspective. Two sons, both flawed. One is dissolute, disengaged, hungry, and conniving. The other is taken for granted and resentful. The beauty of the Jesus’ tale is that all God asks is that we let ourselves be loved. We do not need to focus on avoiding sin so that God can love us; rather, our point of departure is “God loves us—no conditions.” This reality shapes our identity, forms our attitudes, and is reflected in our actions. As Tom Ryan notes, “Spiritual ethics, in sum, is about how, as a follower of Jesus, we collaborate in God’s work of bringing about the Reign of God in a world sorely in need of self-giving love, compassion, justice and mercy.

“\textit{The focus here is on allowing our decision-making process to grow us into that which we are meant to be.}”

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\textsuperscript{2} See for example, Joseph A. Selling, Reframing Catholic Theological Ethics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
\textsuperscript{3} Warren Carter’s Seven Events that Shaped the New Testament World (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013) offers a readable outline of tensions in the early Christian community.
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\textbf{Tricia Hoyt is a biblical scholar who has served in the Diocese of Phoenix for over 30 years. She is at heart an inveterate storyteller and a lover of extraordinary grandchildren.}
**Ethical Decision-Making Case Study:**

**THE PLASTIC STRAW BAN**

By Kristin Lam

As cities and businesses across the nation ban plastic drinking straws, proponents cite the need to reduce waste and protect the environment. Single-use plastics not only accumulate in landfills, but pollute oceans and beaches, killing wildlife, damaging ecosystems, and contaminating water. Environmentalists argue that everyone can make a difference by doing without plastic straws, labeling the utensils unnecessary. They see it as a simple step to cut back on the toxic material that takes hundreds of years to decompose.

For many disabled people, however, plastic straws are an essential life tool. They depend on them for hydration and nutrition. Without them, they cannot drink or take medication. Involuntary muscle movement and other disabilities can make lifting and holding things, tilting the head, swallowing, and breathing difficult. Plastic straws, unlike alternatives, bend easily, don’t trigger allergic reactions, don’t fall apart or dissolve, and don’t pose injury risks.

The plastic straw ban controversy shows us that ethical decision-making is multi-dimensional and requires coalitions of people with diverse life experiences to work together. If the spaces where people craft policies are not inclusive, the consequences hurt communities that are not represented.

Telling disabled people to bring their own straws to restaurants, cafes, and bars places an additional burden on them when many already consider an array of access issues. Some might find they cannot maneuver a wheelchair between tables or fit one in a restroom stall. Others might not be able to get up and down riser seating or be able to eat menu items that aren’t cut in small portions.

The campaign to ban plastic straws, at best, inconsiderately overlooks disabled people who depend on them. Environmentalists probably do not intend to limit people’s access to drinks or ability to go on spontaneous trips. But they likely didn’t include disabled people in their conversations or plans. Those who rushed to pass bans did not reach out to them or chose to ignore them. Some reasoned they could discover solutions together afterwards, even though they could have done that from the beginning.

One in four adults in the United States has a disability that impacts major life activities, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Some cities even have disability committees that advise public officials on policies that affect their community. Still, some local representatives decided to pass bans without holding meetings or forums first or far enough in advance.

Even initial exemptions, such as the one in San Francisco’s ordinance, were poorly thought out and vague. Accounting for disabled people and accessibility clearly was not a priority. Perhaps considering disability needs became an afterthought only in the wake of backlash.

Whatever the reason for exclusion, disabled people deserve better. The Americans with Disabilities Act passed 28 years ago. Plastic straw bans are an issue of equity and equal access.

As #SuckItAbleism trended on Twitter, people explained how plastic straws are vital to their daily lives. Disability advocates and organizations publicly spoke out against bans, leaving proponents little excuse but to say they did not know who to consult in the decision-making process.

The campaign to ban plastic straws did not include disabled people at the table. It did not make powerful planning spaces or conversations accessible to them. It did not factor their needs and how bans would hurt them.

Although the campaign has environmentally-conscious intentions, its disregard of disabled people is unethical. Deeming plastic straws a convenience and declaring everyone can enjoy beverages without them shows ignorance. Cities and businesses should not reduce waste at the expense of disabled people.

Whether intentional or not, it demonstrates ableism: discrimination and social prejudice against disabled people. It is yet another social justice movement that excludes and hurts marginalized or under-represented groups.

Tensions can result between groups, but calls to protect the environment and be mindful of the disability community do not need to conflict. Social justice movements should lift everyone up, not knock down already marginalized people.

Environmentalists do not need to force additional burdens on disabled people in the forms of emotional and physical labor. Disabled people who need plastic straws are not environmentally irresponsible, either. In fact, many disabled people support protecting the environment in ethical, effective ways — just as everyone should.

Solutions to reducing the 8 million metric tons of plastic going into the ocean every year (per Ocean Conservancy estimates), lie in innovation and dismantling larger issues. Instead of focusing on straws, environmentalists could focus more on plastic carry-out containers, which result in more waste and take up more space. Or they could tackle the commercial fishing industry’s huge plastic fishing nets, which account for 46
percent of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, per a Scientific Reports study.

Plastic straw bans hurt small businesses and their workers that rely on the utensils, too. Straw alternatives cost significantly more and can ramp up expenses. Boba tea shops especially face challenges as they struggle to find affordable substitutes that allow customers to enjoy boba with their drinks.

Again, those issues require diverse groups of people to come together. Manufacturers of straw alternatives can work with businesses to develop non-plastic utensils that work and don’t break budgets. Local governments could help fund the development of new straws or provide innovators incentives. Society is capable of engaging in ethical, multidimensional decision-making. Protecting the planet does not have to disregard the needs of marginalized people and their tools to hydration and nutrition, nor small or boba businesses.

Kristin Lam is a journalist and recent San Jose State University graduate. She is passionate about covering underrepresented and marginalized communities.

Editor’s Note: In this article, the author chose to identify those living with disabilities as “disabled people” after doing significant outreach within that community. However, we recognize that people living with disabilities have a variety of different preferences for how they choose to be identified.

**Ethics for Earth**

By Corinne Sanders, OP

It was unanimous. The delegates of the General Chapter 2016, a decision making body of The Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Michigan called together every six years, committed that one Congregation focus was to “sacrifice to mitigate significantly our impact on climate change and ecological degradation.” This decision fluidly and without ripple flowed from our conversations as we gave voice to our understanding of our unity with Earth and her future. We believe wholeheartedly that our lives are intertwined with Earth, our common home. Our footsteps and our actions make a difference.

Soon after this decision, the campus directors came together to brainstorm how we might live into this commitment. Meatless Monday seemed to be a simple, realistic action to begin our journey. After all, the positive impact of an individual eating a more plant rich diet has often been documented. Following an informational session with residents and co-workers, we began Meatless Mondays.

We learned quickly that asking our community to conserve energy and water use, to begin composting and to intensify our recycling efforts were relatively casual and easy requests. In the struggle to find common solutions, never once did we doubt each other’s commitment to Earth. We knew that we shared the same moral and religious perspective that compelled us to adopt the enactment. However, messing with people’s food preferences is not as simple even if just for one day.

Over this past year and a half, our adventure with Meatless Monday has sparked many conversations, some more challenging than others. In the end, we have negotiated off a strictly ‘plant based menu’ on the cafeteria style dining room menu, to one that includes dairy products and, at times, seafood. Some of us have stretched and changed our dietary choices beyond Monday’s offering. Many have grown to enjoy farro, quinoa, and other grains. All of us remain committed to small and large changes in our lifestyle. We realize that this enactment requires continued transformation in our lives to make any difference in our world.

The beginning of living into our vision was the easy part—giving voice to our beliefs. It is in the day to day where we are challenged to stretch, to intensify, to recommit and to do so in communion with each other.

Corinne Sanders, OP is the Director of Sustainability for the Dominican Sisters of Adrian, a Sponsoring Community of IPJC.
Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the dead man’s sister, said to him, “Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone.

–John 11: 39-41

Although there were hints of it earlier—as in the 1980’s, when a major case was brought to light in Louisiana—for most Roman Catholics, the sexual abuse crisis in the Church began in 2002, when the stories emerged in the Boston Globe showing both widespread abuse of children and vulnerable adults and a Church hierarchy who seemed determined to cover up and conceal years of allegations. Since those days, however, it has become apparent that the crisis of Boston is, in fact, a crisis for the whole Church—proven by revelations throughout the United States, as well as Australia, Ireland, Chile, and, most recently, Germany. What at first seemed a scandalous breakdown of moral values and oversight authority has become something more: a challenge to the very survival of the institutional Church. Especially since the recent Pennsylvania report, which traces 75 years of abuse and cover-up, a new attitude to the crisis seems to be forming among many in the Church. For, even though heartbroken and disgusted by the stories of sexual exploitation and victimization of the most vulnerable among us, increasingly it is the nearly uniform response by those with authority in the Church which has made many wonder if the problem might not be with the institution itself: i.e., might there be some fundamental flaw in the Church, exposed by this vicious and vast conspiracy of depravity and darkness?

The search to find the flaw in the institutional Church which led to the cover-up of sexual abuse has brought out many of the old causes in new forms. Among Church traditionalists, the villain is the sexual revolution and the greater acceptance of homosexuality that has infiltrated the Church and the thinking of many leaders. Ignoring both psychological research on sexual orientation and the evidence of the Pennsylvania report—where some of the most egregious acts occurred in the 1940’s—the argument seeks to reinforce rather than reform the fundamental structure of hierarchy. At the same time, more progressive voices point to celibacy or the absence of women in clerical structures and leadership as the reason for the abuse of both children and power. And while there is strong evidence from other areas of society that the absence of women from any level of power in the Church heightens the patriarchal structures of oppression and privilege—making the “specialness” of clerics not just a matter of association, but a part of nature—there is no evidence that, if one maintains the same structures and merely brings women into them, that the abuse would be eliminated. Likewise, while celibacy creates a fundamental loyalty to the center of power, which has made the clerical caste more cohesive and self-protecting, there is no clear evidence that, by making the privacy of it harder to maintain. Celibates are not more likely to offend or cover up abuse just by virtue of their celibacy.

What is common to all of these “fixes” is that they look for adjustment—i.e., tweaking—of the structures of the Church, while ignoring that the structure itself may be based upon a faulty premise, one which must be transformed if the Church is to remain a viable institution into the future. Built on medieval ethical structures of caste and of divine empowerment,
the institutional Church arose in a
time of kings and princes. The Pope,
ordained by God and chosen by the
Cardinals under divine inspiration, was
heir of the Emperor as well as Vicar of
Christ, and bishops were his princes.
What checks or balances there were
in this medieval structure came not
through the voice of the people, but
through the power of those also or-
dained and anointed in their offices:
i.e., the feudal monarchs. Because of
this ethic, the institutional Church has
often resisted movements such as the
Enlightenment and the revolutions of
the 18th and 19th centuries.

Though Vatican II seeks to break
this model and speak of the Church in
the modern world, its documents and
post-conciliar implementations reveal
a fundamental and ongoing tension
between this medieval ethos and the
society's shows how dangerous such thinking
can be. Bound together by the ontologi-
cal distinction of ordination, clerics are
pushed to see as their peers only other
priests, and to distinguish themselves
from outsiders, a pressure reinforced by
exclusive seminary training, by celibacy,
by the exclusion of women from priest-
hood, and by an absence of required lay
consultation. “We are different,” clerics
are told by word and implication, “and
we care for each other and protect each
other first.” Though healthy men, raised
in diverse communities, may resist this
message—as many have—it is always
part of the background of priesthood,
and is heightened for those given respon-
sibility—along with rings of power—to
protect the institution and its member
from “others.” Under such a system, it is
small wonder that one’s moral compass
is undermined by the weight of an his-
torical ethos.

The reform of the Church, then,
must begin by breaking the power of the
medieval ethic of caste. Taking
seriously the work of Vatican II, the
Church must learn from the modern
world the essential benefits and moral
requirement of diversity in govern-
ance, and of educating all members to
see other members as peers, not sub-
jects nor rulers. It is no longer morally
appropriate (if it ever was) to keep any
part of the People of God from tables
of power and decision making. While
maintaining an appropriate opera-
tional structure—where decisions can
be made and acted upon—the institu-
tional Church needs to move to escape
its antiquarian tomb:

- through the transformation or
elimination of feudal symbols and
language;
- through the mandatory inclusion
of women and other laity in the
deliberations of bishops and in their
selection;
- through a long process of educa-
tion for priests that theirs is call
from within the community to the
community;
- through a separation of sacramen-
tal ministry and temporal power,
and through a more expansive un-
derstanding of ordination.

Though we may worry that moving
the stone will mean unfastening the
rock of Peter, if we believe, we may yet
see the life that Christ will bring forth.

Fr. John D. Whitney, S.J. is a
Jesuit priest and pastor of St. Joseph
Parish in Seattle. Previously, he has
taught Philosophy at Seattle University
and worked as Provincial Superior of
the Jesuits of the Northwest
NWCRI Update

A majority of shareholders (52%) of American Outdoor Brands supported our Gun Safety resolution at the Company’s annual meeting on September 25. Read about our advocacy with gun manufacturers and retailer Dick’s Sporting Goods on p. 2 of the 2018 NWCRI Annual Report included in this issue of AMOS.

Season of Creation Mass 2018

Blessing of the St. James Cathedral Kitchen Garden after the 2nd Annual Season of Creation Mass.

To commemorate the Season of Creation, IPJC co-sponsored in the 2nd Annual Laudato Si’ Mass. To learn more about our collaboration on living out the message of Laudato Si,’ “A New Solidarity with Creation,” visit: www.ipjc.org/programs/a-new-solidarity-with-creation/.

Congratulations Sr. Judy!

Please join us in congratulating Judy Byron, OP for receiving the 2018 Legacy Award at the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility gathering in October. Judy leads NWCRI to promote gun safety, anti-trafficking, healthcare and human rights through shareholder advocacy. We thank her for her tireless efforts to promote justice in the corporate boardroom!

IPJC Presents

Building the Beloved Community
RACISM & BEYOND

Saturday, November 10
8:45am–3pm
St. Joseph Parish
732 18th Ave E, Seattle
Suggested donation $25 includes lunch
To register online visit:
www.ipjc.org/belovedcommunity
Human Trafficking

Qatar’s National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking

Trafficking in Persons Report 2018 Heroes

In July Patty Bowman, Judy Byron, OP and Elizabeth Murphy participated in an exchange program at the World Affairs Council in Seattle. We shared IPJC’s work to end human trafficking with Trafficking in Persons Report 2018 Heroes from Bahrain, Burkino Faso, Cameroon, El Salvador, Indonesia, Nepal, Nigeria, Serbia, South Korea and Sudan; and officials from Qatar’s National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking.

Donations

In honor of: Judy Byron, OP
In memory of: Margaret Lichter, Marian Malonson, Gael O’Reilly, Carole Resnick

Support IPJC

Let us know if your company matches donations
We accept gifts of stock
Designate IPJC when buying from smile.amazon.com

Young Adult Justice Café

Justice Cafés for the 2018-19 year are off to a great start! It’s not too late to join or start a Justice Café near you. Email ipjc@ipjc.org for more information.

Justice Café group at Holy Family Church in Kirkland, WA

2018-2019 Justice Café Topics:
Season 1: Global Issues, Local Action

OCT
Sharing the Journey with Migrants and Refugees

NOV
Violent Conflict and the Need for Peace

Season 2: Justice for Daily Life

JAN
Spirituality for Social Justice

FEB
Overcoming Polarization

MAR
Social Justice as a Vocation

Save the Date

Catholic Advocacy Day
February 7, 2019

IPJC Spring Benefit
April 10, 2019
Reflection

Gather a group to read and reflect on this issue of A Matter of Spirit.

Leader: In this issue of A Matter of Spirit, we’ve had the chance to reflect on ways ethical decision making touches every aspect of our lives, from Meatless Mondays, to bans on plastic straws, to what our spirituality tells us about discernment. Let us now take this opportunity to reflect on the wisdom of each author and consider how we might reexamine our approach to decision-making.

Reader 1: “To act ethically, we have two major tasks. The first is to define our own ethical principles and standards—and the second is to do the hard work of applying those principles and standards to often very complex situations.” — Kirk O. Hanson

Reader 2: “Catholic social teaching calls us to subsidiarity. It’s quite a simple concept, really: Those who are closest to a problem are the best ones to articulate the most workable solutions.” — Eric Clayton

Reader 3: “Engaging in Ignatian discernment is helpful in two important ways. First, it helps us eliminate those things that clutter our ability to see clearly. And second, it can help us get in touch with our deepest self, and when our actions align with our core identity, we are both more confident in our actions and more at peace.” — Matt Barmore

Reader 4: “Christian ethics, in sum, is about how, as a follower of Jesus, we collaborate in God’s work of bringing about the Reign of God in a world sorely in need of self-giving love, compassion, justice and mercy.” — Tricia Hoyt

Reader 5: “Ethical decision-making is multi-dimensional and requires coalitions of people with diverse life experiences to work together.” — Kristin Lam

Reader 6: “It is in the day to day where we are challenged to stretch, to intensify, to recommit and to do so in communion with each other.” — Corinne Sanders, OP

Reader 7: “The reform of the Church, then, must begin by breaking the power of the medieval ethic of caste.” — Fr. John Whitney, SJ

Leader: I invite anyone who would like to share one or two ways you will apply something you learned in this issue to ethical decision making in your own life. Pause for sharing.

Let us close with the following prayer:

Creator God, through Scripture you guide us to answer the tough questions that we face on a daily basis. Give us the wisdom to consider how our decisions impact those around us, especially those who are marginalized and our precious Earth. We continue to strive for the compassion, justice and mercy that you seek. Amen.