From the Director
— John Merkle

This October marks the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), the defining event for Catholicism in the twentieth century. Pope John XXIII convened the council for the purpose of aggiornamento, “updating,” and it was in this spirit that the council initiated church reform in a variety of areas, including interfaith relations.

Among the sixteen documents issued by Vatican II is the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. This document claims that “the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in [other] religions,” and it urges Catholics to engage in “dialogue and collaboration with followers of other religions” and to “acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods” found in these religions while at the same time “witnessing to their own faith and way of life.”

The Jay Phillips Center, by promoting interfaith learning, friendship, and service, is carrying out a mandate of Vatican II and thereby supporting the Catholic identity of its host institutions. On behalf of everyone associated with the center, I welcome all members of the CSB/SJU community to join us in interfaith activities inspired by Vatican II.

All are welcome to attend the center’s public events and to participate in special interfaith learning and service groups. The center’s student leadership coordinators, Brenna Horn and Vicky Liu, have been getting good responses to their excellent programs, and they would love to have more students involved. And my colleague Hans Gustafson and I welcome your collaboration and are eager to hear your suggestions for programs that might enhance interfaith learning and service on our campuses. Please do let us hear from you! Ω
From the Editor
— Eric Christensen

Now that the semester is in full swing, we’re probably pretty well settled into our routines. Classes and a myriad of social interactions are most likely moving right along at a more or less consistent pace. However, I fear that it is our duty at the Jay Phillips Center to ask you to check that momentum and whether there might be some worthwhile avenues that you have not yet explored—and yes, I am referring to interfaith learning, broadly speaking.

Let’s face it—interfaith engagement sometimes comes along naturally, and I think our campuses are diverse enough to present great spontaneous occasions for such encounters, but it can often be the sort of thing that must be sought out on purpose. (Have you detected a not-so-subtle endorsement of our events this semester? I hope so.) It seems safe to say that the majority of us have not had the sort of life-altering and traumatic experiences that Fr. Lapsley had, so what motivates us to seek others out in order to further our common journey toward mutual respect, understanding, and peace? Do we find time to seek people, conversations, and events that might force us to alter our established momentum and to veer off in new directions that are simultaneously challenging and life giving?

Clearly, the answers to those questions are up to you. I will, however, simply invite you—in the firm conviction that we are all better together—to take the time to join us as we journey through a semester of interfaith learning. Ω

October Events

Pain Knows No Boundaries:
An Interfaith Journey of Healing and Hope
Presentation and Book Signing by Fr. Michael Lapsley
Tuesday, October 2, 8:00 p.m.
Pellagrene Auditorium, Peter Engel Science Center, SJU

Michael Lapsley was born in New Zealand and was ordained as an Anglican priest in Australia. Soon after moving to South Africa in 1973 he became a prominent figure in the struggle against apartheid. In 1976 he was expelled from the country and moved to Lesotho, the small landlocked country surrounded by South Africa, where he became a chaplain to the African National Congress in exile. From there he travelled the world, mobilizing faith communities to oppose South Africa’s apartheid system and to support the struggle for freedom there.

After a police raid killed forty-two people in Lesotho in 1982, Fr. Michael moved to Zimbabwe, where in 1990, soon after Nelson Mandela’s release from prison, he opened a letter bomb meant to assassinate him. In the explosion he lost both of his hands and one eye, and he was seriously burned.

Following his recovery, he worked for the Trauma Center for Victims of Violence and Torture in Cape Town, South Africa, where he assisted Bishop Desmond Tutu in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In 1998 he launched the Institute for Healing of Memories and currently serves as its director. He has become a well-known international advocate for reconciliation, forgiveness, and restorative justice, and he has conducted workshops in many countries, enabling people from different ethnic groups, races, and religions to reach a better understanding of themselves and each other.

Interweaving what he has learned through listening to stories and working in a wide variety of contexts across the world and what he has learned through reflection on his own life’s journey, Fr. Michael Lapsley will discuss the fundamental importance of an interfaith vision for the work of building a peaceful world. In the process, he will highlight the urgency of acknowledging past wounds to break the cycle that turns victims into victimizers, and he will consider how lessons from South Africa’s long journey to freedom—a journey in which he played a key role and for which he suffered greatly—might apply to analogous struggles in the United States. After the presentation, Fr. Michael’s new book, Redeeming the Past: My Journey from Freedom Fighter to Healer, will be available for purchasing and signing.

October Events continued on page 3.
October Events (Continued)

The Radical Notion of Rest: Reflections on the Meaning of the Sabbath
Presentation by Rabbi David Wirtschafter
Wednesday, October 10, 8:00 p.m.
Quad 264, SJU
A familiar face to the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University, Rabbi Wirtschafter is back this fall with another engrossing topic. This time he will converse with us about the idea of the Sabbath as a day of rest for all people, which in biblical times was a revolutionary idea that challenged social orders based on the assumption that some people owned other people’s time. The Sabbath, in the words of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, is a “sanctuary in time.”

The Sabbath has been one of the most important social and intellectual contributions of the Jewish people to civilizations throughout the world. Importantly, our contemporary digital age raises new challenges for the distinction between the workplace and home, between labor and rest.

Dakota 38
Film Screening and Discussion with Jim Miller and Alberta Iron Cloud
Thursday, October 18, 8:00 p.m.
Alcuin Library, AV-1, SJU
What do you know about the largest mass execution in the history of the United States? Would you be surprised to learn that it occurred in Minnesota in 1862, that thirty-eight people of the Dakota tribe were hanged, or that President Lincoln ordered it?

Native American spiritual leader Jim Miller has crafted an intimate and masterful narrative about this tragic and often forgotten piece of American and Minnesotan history.

Religion and Politics in Today’s America
An Interfaith Conversation Moderated by Kerri Miller
Panelists: Pastor Leith Anderson, Imam Makram Nu’Man El-Amin, Fr. Bill Voss, and Rabbi Marcia Zimmerman
Thursday, October 25, 8:00 p.m.
Stephen B. Humphrey Theater, SJU
Kerri Miller, host of Minnesota Public Radio’s weekday program The Daily Circuit, will moderate a panel of religious leaders who will discuss the intersection of religious faith and political commitments, especially in light of the 2012 presidential election.

This timely conversation promises to be lively and deeply thoughtful and engaging. Details regarding the panelists can be found on our web page.

From Collegeville to Cappadocia

Hans Gustafson, the Jay Phillips Center’s assistant director, traveled to Turkey in June with the Niagara Foundation of Minnesota, a foundation that promotes global fellowship, intercultural exchange, and peace and bridge building between Turkey and Minnesota. The trip was sponsored by BAKiAD (the Bosphorus-Atlantic Association of Cultural Cooperation and Friendship) located in Istanbul and was led by Professor Ozer Asdemir, a native of Turkey who now serves as a professor of accounting at the Opus College of Business at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul.

The tour visited Istanbul, Izmir, Ephesus, Ankara, Cappadocia, Kayseri, and Konya. In addition to visiting the ancient sites, the group had the privilege of visiting families, businessmen, a high school, a university, a nonprofit organization, and a television station. These included Samanyolu High School in Ankara, Mevlana University in Konya, and Kimse Yok Mu in Istanbul. On behalf of the Jay Phillips Center, Hans made connections with Turkish academics, businessmen, and social workers, many of whom are inspired by the interfaith outreach initiatives taught by Fethullah Gülen, a well-known contemporary Turkish author, educator, and Muslim scholar.

Ozer Asdemir and Hans Gustafson in Cappadocia
Interfaith Learning

Interfaith Leaders
— Brenna Horn and Vicky Liu

It was our second week back on campus; our team of student interfaith leaders met in the Gorecki Fireside Lounge to discuss the agenda for the semester. We were interrupted partway through our meeting by a student sitting nearby: “What are you guys talking about? This sounds interesting.” Another student joined shortly after. We took the opportunity to explain our group to them, and they took the opportunity to talk about their beliefs and values. Although we have plenty of opportunities on our Catholic campuses for planned and structured discussions of faith, values, and philosophy, such things also often occur at the most unexpected times.

Providing forums, planned or not, for this kind of dialogue is an important aspect of our work at the Jay Phillips Center, and we strongly encourage people to voice their own beliefs and values. We aim to provide opportunities for students not only to learn from others but also to teach others. Our beliefs and values are at the heart of our identities, and they are also central to what motivates us. Thus, interfaith cooperation pushes us forward; it provides our community with the resources to mobilize and serve others with the power of our convictions.

We are pumped for this school year! Are you? We certainly hope so. The student interfaith leaders are back! We are strong, motivated, and prepared to contribute to our campuses and our surrounding community. As part of our Better Together program, this year we will be addressing the achievement gap in St. Cloud. Minnesota has one of the nation’s largest achievement gaps between students of color and white students. This problem has far more serious social, economic, and political implications than only “bad grades.” Parents, students, school districts, NGOs, and many other groups are already working on addressing this issue, and we are joining them this year. The achievement gap is very prevalent in our society, and it affects many, many people. Join us in our efforts to learn more about this issue and to work toward shrinking the gap in our local community.

Interfaith Resources

On Being (www.onbeing.org)
This weekly radio program, hosted and produced by Krista Tippett and formerly titled Speaking of Faith, is an expansive endeavor that brings together diverse areas of inquiry and understanding—from religion to science, ethics to culture, philosophy to art—in order to address fundamental human questions of meaning.

According to their web site, “Krista envisioned a program that would draw out the intellectual and spiritual content of religion that should nourish our common life, but that is often obscured precisely when religion enters the news. Our sustained growth as a show has also been nurtured by a cultural shift that seeks conversation, shared life, and problem-solving within and across religious traditions and across categories of belief and non-belief.”

We recommend the following programs for starters: “The Dignity of Difference,” “Contemplating Mortality,” and “The Science of Healing Places,” as well as the On Being blog: www.onbeing.org/blog.

Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC, www.ifyc.org)
Founder and president Eboo Patel is a nationally known leader for interfaith efforts, and the IFYC is an established and active organization in which many college students around the United States participate. Check out their exciting vision and efforts at their web site, and don’t forget to peruse their blog, which is notable for the youthful yet wise voices of the writers. While you are there, we suggest you take their quick and informative Interfaith Literacy Quiz.

If the IFYC seems familiar for some reason, it could be because the Jay Phillips Center participates in IFYC’s Better Together program, and you might have heard about or participated in one or more of our Better Together events this September.

Newspapers
The following are some specific sections of well-known newspapers that you might find helpful.

- Acts of Faith, a Star Tribune blog by Rose French
- The New York Times, Religion and Belief section
- The Washington Post, On Faith section
- The Huffington Post, Religion section

Jay Phillips Center Social Media
We’re on Facebook, Google+, and Twitter, and our web site is full of information regarding JPC events.