



# Call to Action of Michigan Newsletter

## Spring 2007



P.O. Box 12161, Hamtramck, Michigan, 48212

[www.cta-mi.org](http://www.cta-mi.org)

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## President of CTA MI meets Bishop Bruskewitz

*Sister Beth Rindler at St. John's Center, Plymouth*

Perhaps a better headline would read "Sr. Beth Walks into Lion's Den". While some CTA members stood on Five Mile road in front of St. John's Center with signs to 'welcome' Bishop Bruskewitz when he arrived, security guards at two entrances prohibiting folks on the property, (Catholic property paid for by Catholic donations), Sr. Beth had purchased a ticket for \$150 (with help from friends) to enter the building where she could meet the good bishop from Nebraska. She did.

Reflect on some of her comments: "--- Upon meeting the first woman I quickly learned that she had received a Master's Degree at Ave Maria College and did not believe women should be priests. --- Then a husband and wife came in and quite upfront reminded me that the only theology to be accepted is the theology put forth by the men in the Vatican. --- Soon we were a circle of people engaged in conversation that seemed to center on one subject to them, the importance of "absolute truth". Up to this point people knew me only as Sister Beth, a Franciscan Sister of the Poor". (Smart move, Beth. At least you were not thrown out before having a chance to meet the bishop.)

Now comes the good part. (Sr. Beth) "--- after awhile I noticed two men dressed in very black suits. For some reason I moved towards the one I thought might be Bishop Bruskewitz. It was. I could see his name tag. I stood in front of him as he was conversing with several people. We made eye contact a couple of times. Then in time he invited me into his conversation. --- We chatted for a while about the Sisters of the Poor and how his sister, who is a school sister of St. Frances Milwaukee, now serves as HIS supervisor of HIS schools.

After awhile I told him I was associated with Call to Action. I could sense immediately he was taken back a bit. (What an understatement! Did he not step back with totally surprised expression, Beth? You did get his attention). My first comment to him was why he did not talk with the people associated with Call to Action. He said he did talk with them (he excommunicated them) and went so far as to say to me that he was familiar with the Ordinations on the Danube, and that he knew Call to Action had 'priestesses'. My recall of our conversation from that point on becomes rather blurred, only to remember that he began moving away from me. I was not moving away from him.

I think that if I ever meet him again, he will remember our conversation together. Even though this bond is quite small, I think it is good." Bless you, Sr.Beth!

*Continued on page 8*

## Dear CTA people of Michigan:

I got such a 'shot in the arm' from meeting so many of you in Michigan. What a strong faith based group! The Holy Spirit is alive and well in your hearts. There was a real interest in canon law and how this law affects the lives of the Christian Faithful.

I was impressed at the *communio*, community that already exists between the people. I also felt and heard the pain that is in many hearts concerning perceived abuses in the Church regarding the use of money, the absence of servant leaders, the stance of divide and conquer of so many in the Church.

You love the Church, not just the way it is now, but also how it could be. The desire to have a 'true strong hope' was evident at each group. It was exciting to see your imagination expanding and to feel the energy coming from you affirming your solidarity.

The People of God who came together at each site were so energized and asked such good questions. I felt the presentation began to open new doors of awareness and people began to make the connections of their Baptismal call and their lived reality as the People of God.

An informed laity will make great strides to implement the documents of Vatican II.

Your desire to continue to be informed about the documents and the code of canon law will be enhanced by future presentations and future discussions. I left feeling that the fire of the Holy Spirit was enkindled in your lives, minds and hearts. What a privilege to be in the midst of so many good people!

Sr. Kate

## CTA News from Kalamazoo --

Sr. Kate began her journey through snowy Michigan on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March. Eight of the local CTA members had a delightful preview of her talk at a delicious potluck dinner at the home of Kim Franke and Jim Rose. She was warmly received by 35 people. Two women who wanted to hear the information traveled from Saginaw! We were graciously hosted by Kalamazoo College for the evening presentation. (CTA sponsored events are not welcomed on church property in our diocese) Being her first stop, she was fresh and well prepared.

The one-hour presentation was followed by a second hour of questions addressing the canons of 1983 which speak to the rights and responsibilities of the laity. She recognized the canons of 1983 as the 'final documents of the Vatican II', and that these canons have as their source the documents of Vatican II, Scripture, prior encyclicals and other official published positions of the church. She pointed out that these canons are not widely invoked but can be found at [www.vatican.va/archive](http://www.vatican.va/archive) and that these canons are not limiting but empowering. Sr. Kate is consulting with parishes and helping them invoke the canons in their defense against bishops who are closing inner city parishes.

Sr. Kate felt that today is an exciting time in the history of the Church, as the Church is going through the 'Paschal Mystery' in preparation for the emergence of a renewed church. She spoke of what she termed a 'tough hope' that she has come to recognize and appreciate in her own personal journey in the church. Written evaluations were all favorable and surprisingly almost no one present was familiar with the information that Kate presented. It seems evident that no preaching or dissemination of this information is taking place from the pulpits or RCIA programs in the Church.

Future plans for our area group include book discussions using Michael Morwood's books to prepare for his possible tour and in anticipation for Synod '08.

Kalamazoo-CTA's warm reception of Sr. Kate was limited only by the 10° F cold that greeted us as left the Hicks Center that evening.

# CTA News from around Michigan

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## Saginaw --

Saginaw did pretty well. Ninety-two (92) were in attendance to hear Sr. Kate's presentation. In this dark night of the church Sr. Kate Kuenstler lit a candle of hope for all who came to St. Andrew's Catholic Church on Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup>. She gave us a revelation of hope as to our rights and responsibilities under Canon Law 1983.

People in attendance came from a broad area of the diocese, Midland, Bay City, Caseville and surrounding areas. Priests, nuns, Voice of the Faithful, along with many CTA members filled the pews. Sr. Kate shared a revelation of the pastoral side of Pope Benedict 16<sup>th</sup> and some of the machinations of the curia during the last day of Pope John Paul II. After the long dark nights of winter, which are being replaced by signs of spring, we truly believe that Hope springs Eternal. Thank you, Sr. Kate.

All in all it was a successful event. I can tell you that everyone leaving St. Andrew's went away excited and impressed. Kate, however, was exhausted. Remember it was her fifth and last stop in five nights, standing and talking for more than 2 hours each night.

What a wimp! But then we stayed up and talked until 1:00 am, what a gem!

Thank you, Sr. Kate, Woman of Hope, and thank you everyone for your presence and participation. We just experienced another growth spurt as adult Christian Faithful.

Rosemary Moon

## Lansing --

At 6:00 p.m. on March 6 there was apprehension in Lansing about Sr. Kate's scheduled presentation. The roads were slick with falling snow. Who's going to come?

Plymouth Congregational Church offered us a wonderful ambiance for the occasion. Round tables were set up for 35 people in a colorfully warm setting with even a working microphone. At 6:30 some of us made final adjustments while the wind howled outside.

At 6:45 people came, some from Fowler, Mason, Grand Ledge, Williamston, until fifty (50) arrived, including 2 Pastors. When Sr. Kate started her presentation at 7:05 she said she could feel "energy" in our group. People were attentive with many taking notes. At break time only 4 left while others asked many pertinent questions over the next 40 minutes.

Special thanks go to the Ludwigs and Ralls for hosting and getting the word out. At 9:30 p.m. about 12 of us laid our hands on Sr. Kate and offered a blessing upon her and upon her mission! No more apprehension now, just a good feeling about what we had experienced together.

Other Lansing notes: CTA Lansing gathered for a Friday eve social early February to view and discuss Sr. Joan Chittister's keynote presentation in Milwaukee last November.

In March, after a Sunday home liturgy and brunch we viewed and shared our thoughts about a popular DVD called "The Secret".

Joe Droste

### *"From Sand to Solid Ground: Questions of Faith for Modern Catholics"*

... is the title of Michael Morwood's new book. Is it time to invite him back to Michigan? Could he be our next traveling speaker next spring, as Angela Bonavoglia did last year with "Good Catholic Girls" and Kate Kuenstler this year on 1983 Code of Canon Law? Or, could he be chosen as a major presenter at "Synod 08". Based on the latest information it is a go. Michael will be welcome.

# More CTA News from around Michigan

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## Washtenaw --

Sr. Kate's presentation on March 7 in Ann Arbor proved to be a very informative evening. Forty (40) people gathered in the spacious and very comfortable reception room of Rosemary Sarri's apartment building. Some present were not CTA members but are interested in church justice issues, such as parish closings. Fortunately, they were able to find out about the meeting via word of mouth and the March 6 Ann Arbor News article.

In addition to Rosemary, who arranged the meeting place, special thanks go also to Joyce and Ron Mason for doing much of the coordinating and for driving to Lansing to bring Sr. Kate to Ann Arbor, to Rosemary Rader, Judi Pawloski and Delphine Palkowski for coordinating the refreshments. Thanks to all who brought such delicious hors d'oeuvres and desserts and other refreshments. Everything was wonderful. Thanks too to Margaret Pooler for talking with our local parishes to see if they would put fliers out. (Unfortunately, St. Mary's in Ann Arbor would not. Shall we add surprisingly also?)

A 1-hour question and answer period followed her presentation. Based upon the questions and discussions it became evident that people's minds were opened to many new ideas affecting their lives as adult Christian Faithful, People of God. Sr. Kate clearly left no doubt about the importance of all Catholics being informed of their "rights and responsibilities", based upon the 1983 code of canon law of the Church. There were even "stunned expressions" among some in the audience, asking a very simple yet straight forward question, "Why have we not heard about all this from our pastors? Why did you, Sr. Kate, have to come all the way from St. Louis, Illinois to tell us about this?" The questions alone send an important message.

Thank you, Sr. Kate, for such an inspirational and informative visit to Ann Arbor.

## Detroit Metro --

On her visit to our branch, Sr. Kate revealed several interesting facts: 1) the hierarchy and their teachings are outdated in matters of Canon Law; 2) the education in seminaries for those graduating before 1983 was based upon the original Code of Canon Law of 1917 (of 2414 canons only 4 were laity based); 3) those ordained since 1983 have been taught for the most part by faculty still using the 1917 Canons.

Is it any wonder Vatican II thinking hasn't taken root as it should have and we are in danger of slipping back to more domination by the Hierarchy instead of a People of God Church. Clearly, in part, the fault lies with seminary teaching. Seminary faculty across the land lag behind understanding Vatican II theology and the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

She also counseled how to get reaction to a concern with a local Bishop: 1) Write a one page, double spaced, polite letter to the Bishop explaining the problem; 2) Cc it to the Papal Nuncio; 3) Cc it to the Pope; 4) tell others to do the same about the same subject;

5) Repeat. (Just like shampoo, eventually the Pope will notice this overflowing file of letters and will initiate action. I guess Bishops by and large do not welcome letters from the Pope.)

Feedback from forty (40) attendees was positive. Remember Kate was the main speaker at our 1905 Conference, introducing us to the empowerment of the Laity that comes from 1983 revision of Canon Law. At the 1906 Conference, Paul Lakeland stirred us even more with possibilities for Lay Christian Faithful in the present Church. Sr. Kate's recent 5 presentation tour across Michigan has put 'frosting on the cake' in preparing CTA-MI for Pre-Synod in October of 2007, with Robert McClory as presenter. Of course, all of this is leading toward the Synod of 2008.

Julia Archer

## A Letter ...

From Tom Hinsberg's  
*Michigan Catholic's Article* (2/14/07)



"I am a longtime member of Call to Action. I attended the original Call to Action conference initiated by Cardinal John Dearden. If I lived in Lincoln, Neb. Diocese (Dec 15), I would be excommunicated. I do not understand why.

Call to Action does not deny any defined teaching. It does disagree with some of the disciplinary prescriptions like celibacy for priests. It asks for continued discussion of the role of women in ministry, the nature and purpose of sexuality. It asks for academic freedom, due process, and financial openness on all levels. It seeks a role for priests, religious and laity in the selection of bishops, a time-honored custom. These positions do not seem to me to be a matter for excommunication.

Dissent is not a sin as long as it is done conscientiously. Dissent from teachings and statement of the Church which are based on reason are open to challenge if the reasons given are debatable. Truth is best achieved in dialogue. Our Church is a communitarian Church. We are a people of God. ----- The Spirit speaks not only in the bishops and the pope but also in the people.

### *Editor's Note:*

Thanks, Tom for allowing CTA to share your article in this newsletter. It comes at a good time, as the good bishop of Nebraska was a featured speaker at St. John's Center just recently, Mar. 16, apparently to teach more of his pre-Vatican II interpretations.

Sr. Kate reminded us of the following regarding Bruskwitz: 1) He is the only one who has pursued this course of action, why? 2) A bishop cannot grant excommunication without due process. Just a letter issued from his office to be read on Sundays does not constitute due process; and 3) the spirit of the code of Canon Law requires legislative restraint always in regards to penalties issued.

So, does the question remain unanswered, viz. does he even have grounds for excommunicating anybody in CTA? For some that question is already answered.

Enough! (P.S. John Carroll, the first Roman Catholic Bishop in the U.S. was elected by American priests.)

## Looking ahead to our Fall Conference

In his book, "Faithful Dissenters: Stories of Men and Women Who Loved and "Changed the Church" Robert McClory tells of people who took risky stands and paid heavily for their dissent.

Yet their dissent unquestionably enriched the church and all of us. They include: Catherine of Siena, Matteo Ricci, John Henry Newman, Thomas Aquinas, Hildegard Bingen, Mary Ward and Yves Congar.

In reading his book, we are vividly reminded that in some instances yesterday's dissenters have become today's models of fidelity and even saints. It is truly and instructive and enjoyable reading.

How will CTA people come off when history is written?

Will some of us be burned at the stake? (Ouch!) Will some of us be 'excommunicated'? (Not as bad!) Will we be damned for heretical beliefs? (Not certain any more.)

Or will we be viewed as prophets and leaders of reform within the Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? As the saying goes, "the jury is still out".

Meanwhile, how fortunate to have this brilliant lecturer and author come to our October 13<sup>th</sup> Conference as our main speaker! For those of us who have heard him before at National Conferences we know that he can be also very funny and entertaining.

Begin looking forward to a great CTA MI conference.

Mark your calendar!



# IN THE SPIRIT AWARD



Almost ten years ago CTA-MI began presenting the IN THE SPIRIT award at its annual conference. As usual, you can participate in the selection process by nominating someone according to the criteria below. Your nomination must be received by June 28, 2007. (Don't file this away in a "TO DO cranny.") The board will select from your submissions. Be sure to include the full name, address, and phone (and cell) number and email address of your nominee in your letter.

We also need your name, address, phones and email information.

## CRITERIA

Catholic CTA-MI member who:

- Loves and follows the teachings of Jesus.
- Is active in efforts to reform the Roman Catholic Church.
- Is familiar with and promotes the ideals of the Second Vatican Council as proclaimed in the Ash Wednesday, 1990 signature ad in The New York Times.
- Is knowledgeable and supports the Michigan call to Action Vision Statement.
- Perseveres under injustice by the official Church.
- Is an inspiration to friends and the wider community around her/him.

Send to: Julia Ann Archer, 22259 Morley, Dearborn MI 48124.

Thank you for your participation.

From Cheryl Bristol:

*"The Love of God has been poured into  
Our hearts by the  
Spirit living in us, alleluia!"*

You are cordially invited to attend the ordination of  
Cheryl Bristol as a Roman Catholic Womanpriest

**Sunday, May 27, 2007    3:00 o'clock pm    Toronto, Canada**

Bishop Patricia Fresen of Germany officiating.

*Editor's Note:* Thank you, Cheryl. Our prayers and our deepest warm wishes are with you,  
especially now as you prepare these final weeks for your ordination.

God bless you! CTA of Michigan

# Call To Action Members and Friends,



Take a public stand in support of the men and women who feel called to ordination.

When: Saturday, May 26, 2007  
Where: Presbyteral Ordination at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral,  
Detroit, MI  
Time: 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

*Join in the peaceful demonstration.  
Refreshments after the demonstration at Gail Hafner's home.*

## 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Call to Action



In 1974 Cardinal John Dearden of Detroit, then head of the National Bishops' Conference, called for a two-year period of discernment to prepare for the implementation of documents of Vatican II across the United States.

After much prayer and study a first national Call to Action Conference was called in Detroit. The words on the brochure were very clear "With Liberty and Justice for All, a Call to Action".

The following excerpt comes from VOICES of Nebraska Catholics and John Krejci, a leading CTA member there: "The bishops asked approximately 1500 delegates: what is the charisma, what should be the character of the Catholic Church in America? Guided by the Spirit, the conference described a Church of inclusion, justice and accountability. At the conclusion Cardinal Dearden implored the delegates: "This weekend we have experienced a new way of being church. Go home and keep us bishops accountable".

---The excerpt continues, "as the time for us to consider concrete proposals for action, let us keep faith with the thousands who have participated in this program. Let us open our hearts and minds to their proposals, and to the future. Let us respond with honesty, compassion and love."

Thirty years later we know this call of Cardinal Dearden was not fully heeded. The bishops put the red-hot documents on the back burner. (The bishops deferred to the Vatican on the issues of contraception, divorce, married priests, women's ordination and other sex-related issues.)

Thanks, John Krejci, for this timely reminder. Isn't it ironic that this note comes from Nebraska, from an 'excommunicatee' (if one can make up such a word). Fabian Bruskewitz 'excommunicates' CTA members; Cardinal Dearden called the first CTA conference. Fabian Bruskewitz, we knew John Dearden. You're no John Dearden.

(Celebration day, August 24, 2007. More to come.)

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**CTA-MI** co-sponsored the March 23rd prayer event with the Women's Ordination Conference in Muskegon Heights, MI.

Kim led the prayer service. We prayed with our own Board Vice President, deacon Cheryl Bristol. Mary Ellen Robertson, deacon, also shared her journey to ordination.

Sr. Beth Rindler, President of CTA-MI, traveled to the western part of the State to pray and support the event. All 15 participants wore purple stoles and were anointed with sacred oils as a reminder of our shared priesthood through baptism.

## **CTA MI President meets Bruskewitz**

*Continued from page 1*

What can one say? I guess just that if the whole matter were not so serious it would be funny. Picture a dozen or so catholic people prevented from entering the property at St. John's Center, with threats to have their cars towed away by police if they dared park them on the property. All this for carrying signs that read "We Support Our Catholic Colleges", "Welcome, Bishop Bruskewitz, CTA" "We Support CTA of Nebraska", etc. One could almost think they belonged to a 'terrorist' group from the way they were treated. It's incredible!

Thanks, Sr. Beth, for your sincerity and your bravery. You met the Bishop and gently reminded him that he should be in dialogue with the good people of Nebraska, not pushing them away with threats of 'excommunication'. The people of Nebraska are so grateful to you, and so are all of us, for reaching out in such a Christ like manner to Bishop Bruskewitz. Isn't it sad he could not do the same?