FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK: A YEAR OF MANY EMOTIONS

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So much has happened in the year 2014. For many, we experienced this year as a roller coaster of thoughts and emotions.

2014 marks a year of remembrance as we celebrate another important anniversary. Fifty years ago, in 1964, Pope Paul VI promulgated the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* (Light of Nations), The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church.

We were elated when we celebrated the first dual canonization of pontiffs in Church history. On Sunday April 27th, Pope Francis canonized John XXIII, who called for the Second Vatican Council, and John Paul II.1

Two months later, on June 21st, Pope Francis surprised us, using “his strongest language to date” to excommunicate members of the Italian mafia.2

We rejoiced in celebration as, after a national search, the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University in New Orleans named Fr. Maurice Nutt, CSs R as its new director. The IBCS is thrice-blessed to have Fr. Nutt in this role. Not only is Fr. Nutt an active member of the BCTS; he’s also both an alumnus and faculty member of the IBCS. Fr. Nutt joins a long history of extraordinary IBCS leaders, including Fr. Dr. Thaddeus Posey, OFM Cap, Fr. Joseph Nearon, SSS, Fr. Dr. Joseph

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Brown, SJ, Sr. Dr. Eva Regina Martin, SSF, and Sr. Dr. Jamie Phelps, OP. True to form, Fr. Nutt thought long and prayed deeply, before agreeing to follow in the footsteps of these notable leaders. “He didn’t take lightly the invitation to be director, discerning for six weeks ‘because I wanted to know if this was where God was calling me,’ he said. ‘I felt God was trying to use me.’”³ The BCTS celebrates Fr. Nutt in his new position and looks forward to many years of growth and success.

Yet, despite our joy following Fr. Nutt’s first successful summer, anger and frustration gripped us as, on August 9th,


⁴ Photo provided by Maurice Nutt.
2014, unarmed teen Michael Brown was shot six times and killed by police at 12:01 pm in Ferguson, Missouri. Rioting in Ferguson ensued for weeks thereafter. Since 9/11, an estimated 5000 civilians have been killed by police in the U.S., and most of the victims have been black or Hispanic, killed by white police. U.S. police shoot and kill an average of 409 people per year. Compare this with statistics from the U.K. Between 2010 and 2014, police officers in England and Wales shot and killed a total of 7 people. According to one social activist organization, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, “police officers, security guards or self-appointed vigilantes killed at least 313 Black people in 2012 — meaning one Black person was killed in the U.S. by law enforcement roughly every 28 hours.” We still have far to go in the quest for racial justice.

Anxiety filled our hearts and minds with the news about the African Ebola epidemic. Several West African nations are experiencing the greatest outbreak of Ebola since it was first documented in 1976, with more than 1400 deaths and 2600 infected. With only four pharmaceutical companies producing vaccines today compared to 26 companies five decades ago, we may be a year or more away from an effective, clinically-tested cure.

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A wave of excitement washed over the Oral History Team as Cecilia Moore, Steve Hamilton and I drove from Astor Florida, to Athens Georgia, to Memphis Tennessee, to Belleville Illinois, to Chicago Illinois, and back again to interview four notable “firsts” in the Oral History Project. Diane Batts Morrow was the first married interviewee; Fr. James Herring O. Praem. was the first interviewee who took his vows after a lengthy secular career – he was in his 50s when he became a priest – Bishop Terry Steib SVD and Bishop Edward Braxton were the first bishops.

And we felt a sense of sadness and loss as we bade farewell to two members of the BCTS family, former IBCS director Sr. Dr. Eva Regina Martin SSF and Fr. Paul Marshall SM. Ironically, the Oral History Team had been discussing tentative plans earlier this year to interview both.

Sr. Eva Regina left a deep impression on her religious community, fellow BCTS members and the IBCS community, as attested in the following comments:10

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Sr. Eva Regina Martin, SSF

On your pilgrim journey in such amazing ways your spirit exuded so much love, light, and leadership. You touched thousands of people in our Church, society, and world. In profound and creative ways you captured and illuminated the multidimensional experiences of Black Catholics, those alive and those who have passed onto glory. I will never go to the French Quarters and walk past the black wrought iron fences, railings, and gates again without remembering you and your academic and scholarly contributions about that history. I am honored and privileged to have known you over the many years. I am so inspired by your powerful legacy!

Dr. Shawnee Daniels-Sykes, SSND
Associate Professor of Theology
Mount Mary University

Sr. Eva Regina Martin, SSF was indeed a woman of great faith and dedication to all whom she serve. Her leadership as Director of the Institute (1997-2003) was creative and steadfast. Her special

11 Photo courtesy of the Clarion Herald.
affection for the elderly was palpable as her own Holy Family sisters will attest. Because of who she was and how she lived her life, I have no doubt that she is already doing the second line in heaven. She joins the dance of praise with the other Holy Family Sisters who entered eternal life, before her and our other venerable ancestors of the Institute especially our saintly icon Sr. Thea Bowman, the other deceased directors and faculty (Joseph Nearon SSS, Thaddeus Posey OFM Cap, Clarence Rivers, “Mothers of the Institute”: Elencie Shynes [Momma Shynes], Mabel Turner [Mamma Mabel], Vivian Roussan [Momma Roussan], and students (Duane Brown, Alice Spurlock, and Corita Loving) and other deceased faculty, staff, and students of the Institute.

Dr. Jamie T. Phelps, OP
Former IBCS Director (2003-2011)

When I found out that Sr. Eva Regina had passed away, my thoughts immediately went back to the last time I saw her in my office. She came by to drop off a book that we had asked to borrow. As always, she walked into the office with a big smile, gave me the book and said, “I want my book back when y’all are done, this is the only one I have and it’s like my second bible.” She was just so comical, but very thoughtful and always willing to help out anywhere she can, especially with the Institute for Black Catholic Studies. The IBCS was one of her passions and she would always make herself available to help out in any way she could. She made sure that she would send two or three of the Holy Family Sisters to our summer program each year. I will miss her very dearly. Rest in Peace Sister Eva Regina Martin, SSF.

Loretta D. Salomon
Institute for Black Catholic Studies
Xavier University of Louisiana

We, The National Black Catholic Congress, wish to express our sincere sympathy on the death of Sr. Eva Regina Martin, SSF. We give thanks to Almighty God for have given us such a gift; a woman of
service, a woman of faith, a woman of God. We loved her, but God loved her even more. There is cause for rejoicing here because Sr. Eva Regina blessed our lives in so many ways.

Valerie Washington
Executive Director
National Black Catholic Congress

Sr. Dr. Jamie T. Phelps, OP with Sr. Eva Regina

12 Photo by Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, D.Min.
Fr. Paul Marshall too is remembered fondly by his colleagues in the BCTS and by community:

Know that I will remember Paul, his colleagues and religious congregation in my thoughts and prayers. I recall him being in one of my theology classes at Catholic Theological Union during one of his sabbaticals. I was impressed with his theological foundation and critical insights – he was a seminarian who took his M.Div. studies seriously! In short, he was a loving person and priest, who seriously sought ongoing theological knowledge as a foundation for his ministry and spiritual journey.

Sr. Dr. Jamie T. Phelps OP  
Former IBCS Director (2003-2011)

\[13\] Photo courtesy of University of Dayton.
I knew and loved Fr. Paul for many years as friend, priest, teacher, colleague, and advocate. We grew together from pre-NBCC 1987, to years of support to Operation Good News, to his uplifting words this year during my mother's final days. Always, he was a clear sign of Christ's love-in-action!!! RIP dear friend, your BEST friend, Jesus is nigh.

Claudine Pannell-Goodlett
BCTS Member

Let us thank God for the gift of his life and the many ways he blessed our University community. Let us thank Mary Our Mother for the gift of his perseverance as a Marianist religious. Together, let us pray that he may rest in the peace of Christ.

Fr. James Fitz, SM
University of Dayton
Vice President for Mission and Rector

Paul’s death is a great loss to the Province and for the Marianist Family. Please pray for him now and thank God for this wonderful religious and brother.

Fr. Martin Solma, SM
Marianist Provincial


Works Cited


