Welcome to the New Year and the first edition of the NALM News and Notes, the monthly communication tool of the National Association for Lay Ministry. Each month you will receive a blog-style newsletter, highlighting information that will hopefully be useful to you as a lay minister. We would love to receive your feedback on this new format! Please send all communications to nalm@nalm.org. Happy New Year!

**National Migration Week 2014: January 5-11**

National Migration Week 2014 takes place January 5-11 with the theme, "Out of the Darkness." Migrants and particularly the most vulnerable migrants: children, the undocumented, refugees, and victims of human trafficking, often find themselves existing in a kind of figurative darkness where their options remain limited and their ability to live out their lives in its fullness severely restricted. Often at risk of violence or exploitation these vulnerable populations need to be provided the support needed so that they can thrive.

**Pope: In New Year, Step Outside Your Comfort Zone, Get Involved**

The New Year will be brighter only if everyone steps outside their safe havens, gets involved and works together to solve local problems with generosity and love, Pope Francis said. As 2013 comes to a close, let everyone ask God for forgiveness and thank him for his patience and love, the pope said as he presided over a Dec. 31 evening prayer service in St. Peter's Basilica.

May Mary "teach us to welcome God made man so that every year, every month, every day be overflowing with his eternal love," he said on the eve of the feast honoring her as Mother of God.

Leading the annual "Te Deum" prayer service to thank God for his blessings in 2013 and the gift of salvation in Christ, the pope asked people to reflect on how they have spent the past year -- the precious days, weeks and months the Lord has given as a gift to everyone. "Have we used it mostly for ourselves, for our own interests or did we know to spend it for others, too? How much time did we set aside for being with God, in prayer, in silence, in adoration?"

People should also reflect on how they used their time to contribute to their communities. The quality of life in a community -- how it runs and looks -- depends on everyone, he said in his homily, which he delivered standing from a lectern. "A city's face is like a mosaic in which the tiles are all those who live there," he said. While public officials and other leaders certainly have more responsibility, "everyone is co-responsible, for the good and bad."
“Have we contributed, in our small way, to making (our communities) livable, orderly, and welcoming?” the pope asked. “What will we do, how will we act in the new year to make our city a little bit better?” As the bishop of Rome, the pope looked at the Italian capital in particular, noting its "extraordinary" spiritual and cultural riches. "And yet, Rome also has many people marked by material and moral poverty, people who are poor, unhappy and suffering, who prick the consciences of every citizen,” he said.

"Everyone has the right to be treated with the same attitude of welcome and fairness because everyone possesses human dignity" and are part of the same human family, he said. Pope Francis said Rome, like all communities, will be more beautiful, hospitable, welcoming and kind "if all of us are attentive and generous toward whoever is in difficulty; if we know how to collaborate with a constructive and caring spirit for the good of all people."

Every community will be a better place "if there are no people who watch it 'from afar,' like a picture postcard, who observe its life only 'from the balcony' without getting involved" directly with the many problems of the men and women who, "whether we want it or not, are our brothers and sisters."

The pope underlined the important work and duty of the church in contributing to people's lives and future, and how, with the leaven of the Gospel, the church is a sign and instrument of God's mercy. After the prayer service, Pope Francis traveled by Popemobile to St. Peter's Square to get a close look at the Nativity scene.

**Roving Report**

The NALM Roving Reporter recently “hit the streets” and asked several people a question regarding Pope Francis. How would you respond?

**Roving Reporter: What has inspired you about Pope Francis?**

**David Amico — Director, Office of Lay Ministry Formation, Diocese of Albany, New York**

I have been inspired by the fact that he takes so very seriously the idea that the pastor must be among his sheep. I think that is a model for all of us in ministry. We have to be in the thick of it and listening to the people, and ministering out of what we are hearing from them. And allowing ourselves to be taught by the people with whom we ministry. Another thing that impressed me and inspired me was when he was recently in Assisi and he specifically asked that when he met with the representatives of the diocese that it include the members of the parish pastoral council, that it included the laity. That speaks volumes to me about the value that he holds for us as laity in sharing in the mission of the Church.

**Cecelia Bennett, J.C.L. -- Associate Director, Loyola Institute for Ministry, New Orleans, Louisiana**

I am most inspired by his Jesuit spirituality. Seeing God in all things and being a person for others. These are the hallmarks of Jesuit spirituality and this is what Pope Francis is living out in his papacy.
Bridget Burke Ravizza, Ph.D.—Professor of Religious Studies, St. Norbert College, DePere, WI

I had the privilege of attending a papal audience this summer, with a group of people from St. Norbert College (and close to 200,000 others!). I was moved by Pope Francis’s words, calling each of us to ensure that the church “is a community in which each one feels welcome and understood, feels the mercy and love of God who renews life.” I was equally inspired to witness Pope Francis weave through the crowds—so open to the people, reaching out to touch them, stopping to hold and kiss the many babies that were passed through the crowd to him. I continue to read stories and see images that point to Pope Francis’s real and powerful presence with the people, especially those on the margins. I appreciate that the Pope’s leadership style includes attentive listening and collaboration. He inspires me because he reminds me of Jesus. He is prayerful and good. He puts people first, exhibits a particular care for the poor, and lives what he preaches.

NALM 2014 Conference Announced

The National Association for Lay Ministry announced that its Annual Conference will be held in Chicago at Catholic Theological Union on May 28-31, 2014. Join us for a spectacular conference and pre- and post-event activities. More information on registration, speakers, pre- and post-conference events and housing will follow in upcoming editions of NALM News and Notes.

First Pastoral Associate with National Certification

In February, Theresa Prymuszewski, the Pastoral Associate at St. Ann Catholic Church in Hagerstown, Maryland (Archdiocese of Baltimore), became the first person in the United States to receive national certification as a Pastoral Associate in the Roman Catholic Church.

“It’s both an honor and a responsibility,” said Prymuszewski, “but most importantly it’s a validation of a call to ministry.” Prymuszewski also sighted the support she has received in ministry from many people including her pastor, Rev. Martin Nocchi.

In addition to Prymuszewski, the following lay ecclesial ministers have also received certification:

- Dianne Rachal of the Diocese of Shreveport as a Director of Worship
- Deborah Scopacasa of the Diocese of Youngstown as a Catechetical Leader.
- Jennifer Ledonne of the Diocese of Covington as a Youth Ministry Leader.
Currently there are over a dozen candidates in the process of national certification as Pastoral Associates and a number of candidates in process for certification in other lay ecclesial ministry roles. For more information about Lay Ecclesial Ministers and the certification process, please visit http://www.lemcertification.org/

**Canadians Write, Promote Material for Annual Week of Prayer for Unity**

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be celebrated around the world, January 18-25, 2014. Printed resources in English and French for the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity can still be ordered (in PDF) from the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). These resources may be freely downloaded online. The CCC has also prepared social media material, available on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/wpcu.canada.

In collaboration with Salt + Light TV, the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism has produced an English and French promotional video clip to promote the resources and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

For the third time in history, a writing committee from Canada has been responsible for drafting the printed resources that will be used throughout the world for the 2014 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The Canadian writing committee was under the chairmanship of the Most Reverend Donald Bolen, Bishop of Saskatoon, and a member for the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

[Link to the resources of the Holy See](#)

[Link to the resources of the Canadian Council of Churches](#)

[Link to the promotional video clip](#)

**A New Year’s Prayer**

Remember us, O God; from age to age be our comforter. You have given us the wonder of time, blessings in days and nights, seasons and years. Bless your children at the turning of the year and fill the months ahead with the bright hope that is ours in the coming of Christ. You are our God, living and reigning, forever and ever. Amen.

*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*