

Message from the Pastor
Rev. Dr. Anthony T. Padovano

September & October 2006

Twentieth Anniversary

The Inclusive Community came into existence twenty years ago. We celebrate our anniversary in October, the month which brings us the commemorations of St. Francis of Assisi (October 4), and the start of the Reformation (October 31). Francis and Luther both wanted a church built on New Testament values. They stressed the spirit of Christianity rather than its structures.

Our community began in Passaic, New Jersey with two pastors (Catholic and Protestant) endorsed by the United Church of Christ. Pastors and members maintain their Catholic and Protestant identities in this Community which gives equal standing to both traditions. This unique, historic arrangement defines who we are.

Our Community later relocated to Nutley. We celebrate worship every Sunday at 10:30 am and follow the Catholic - Protestant liturgical calendar from Advent through Holy Week and Pentecost. We conduct educational programs and offer pastoral service. A team of five ordained clergy preside at alternating services.

The Inclusive Community has been featured in national publications and in New Jersey's major newspapers as well as in references on radio and television.

We have given witness for twenty years to the compatibility of the Catholic and Protestant traditions. The key to this coherence is the celebration together of Communion or Eucharist by a believing community which chooses its leaders and forms close bonds of friendship with one another.

We believe Francis of Assisi would endorse our preference of Gospel values to denominational identities. We are certain that Luther would affirm our ability to find common ground for all in the writings of the New Testament.

After twenty years we are confident we can offer the following testimony or creed as a witness to where we were, what we believe and how we envision the future.

Testimony

We testify that this has been a graced 20 years.

We testify that without this Community we would have been lesser Christians.

We testify that this Community has made us better people and committed us to friendship with one another.

We testify that we have reached out in social justice and solidarity with the vulnerable.

We testify that we have grown in love for the Catholic and Protestant traditions and have made their core values the heart of our spirituality.

We testify that Christ has become our center in a whole new manner and that this required the influence of both Church traditions.

We testify that the alienation from one another which our divisions foster has been transformed into harmony and peace.

We testify that we find a home now in the many Christian Churches from which we once felt estranged.

We testify that the boundaries we have crossed have led us into a land of freedom and commitment.

We testify that it is just such a land that Christ intended for all believers and that in such a land the only structures that are built are structures of inclusivity.

We testify that we have experienced these past years as a summons from God, a calling from Christ, a mandate from the Spirit.

We testify that we shall serve as heralds of this witness for as long as God wants us here and for as long as we can build an inclusive community for all God's people on the sacred soil of faith and friendship.

Anthony