

# Initiatives

In Support of Christians in the World

National Center for the Laity  
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## 40 Years Since Vatican II

“I wish to affirm with force,” Pope Benedict XVI told the world’s cardinals, “my decided will to pursue the commitment to enact Vatican II... The Councilor documents... have shown themselves to be especially pertinent to the new exigencies of the church and the present global society.” (*Origins* [4/28/05], 3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20017)

A few recent events and publications commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vatican II, which closed on December 8, 1965. For example, our National Center for the Laity with the Siena Center (Dominican University, 7200 Division St., River Forest, IL 60305; [www.siena.dom.edu](http://www.siena.dom.edu)) sponsored an October workshop on Vatican II’s theme of liturgy and justice. “Vision and Voices of Vatican II” was a September workshop facilitated by NCL friend Avis Clendenen at Pastoral Ministry Institute (St. Xavier University, 3700 W. 103<sup>rd</sup> St., Chicago, IL 60655; [www.sxu.edu](http://www.sxu.edu)). Russell Shaw, to give one more example, has written an engaging, 14-part series on Vatican II for *Our Sunday Visitor* (200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750; 9/11-12/11/05).

Shaw, in a profile of the Vatican II popes, quotes Pope John XXIII’s famous opening address of October 11, 1962. John XXIII challenges the culture despisers in the church:

In the daily exercise of our pastoral office, we [bishops] have to listen, much to our regret, to voices of persons who, though burning with zeal, are not endowed with too much sense of discretion or measure. In the modern time they can see nothing but prevarication and ruin. They say that our era, in comparison with past eras, is getting worse...

We must disagree with those prophets of gloom who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand.

In the present order of things, Divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by [people’s] own efforts and even beyond their very expectations, are directed toward the fulfillment of God’s superior and inscrutable designs. And everything, even human differences, leads to the greater good of the church.

INITIATIVES strongly recommends the original Vatican II documents for Advent 2005 meditation. There are at least two handy editions: *The Basic Sixteen Documents of Vatican Council II* edited by Fr. Austin Flannery, OP (Liturgical Press [1996], PO Box 7500, Collegeville, MN 56321; \$15.95) and *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II* edited by Fr. Douglas Bushman, STL (Daughters of St. Paul [2000], 50 St. Pauls Ave., Boston, MA 02130; \$19.95).

Our own National Center for the Laity was formed to attract young adults to the exciting vision of Vatican II. Unfortunately, says the NCL, many Church leaders have neglected the thrust of Vatican II amid understandable preoccupation with internal Church matters. Thus, excess emphasis on internal lay ministry, an otherwise “wholesome and significant movement,” says the NCL’s 1977 charter *A Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern*, “has led to a devaluation of the unique ministry of lay women and men” to the world of work.

Drawing upon the NCL’s *Declaration*, the aforementioned Russell Shaw uses U.S. bishops’ statements to illustrate the problem. The bishops devote “substantial time and resources to lay ministry (and in particular to a very small group of lay ecclesial ministers who include religious sisters), [while] saying and doing virtually nothing to encourage and promote lay apostolate.” Yet, Shaw says, according to Vatican II “the work of the laity participating in the mission of the church out in the secular world (*apostolate*) comes before the work that some do in Church settings (*ministry*).” (*Ministry Or Apostolate: What Should Catholic Laity Be Doing?*, Our Sunday Visitor Press [2002], 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750; \$9.95)

In November 2005 the U.S. Catholic bishops issued yet another statement on internal lay ministry. It is titled *Co-Workers in the Vineyard: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. (*National Catholic Reporter* [9/16/05], PO Box 419281, Kansas City, MO 64141 and *Church* [Fall/05], 18 Bleecker St., New York, NY 10012)

The NCL advises readers of INITIATIVES not to wait for permission to be a Christian in the world. Instead, act on the competence that comes with baptism. NCL founder Ed Marciniak (1917-2004) explains the NCL game plan this way: "We can't wait for cues that never come and summonses never delivered. While others make excuses, we baptized Christians recite an act of contrition and then shoulder our responsibility for improving the world. To wait and do nothing is to be nothing."

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## **Taking the Initiative**

### *Assisting the Unemployed*

Barbara Ehrenreich hit the bestseller list with her participant-observer survey of the working poor, *Nickel and Dimed: On Not Getting By in America* (Owl [2001], 175 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010; \$13). Now she applies the same methods to describe white-collar unemployment in *Bait and Switch: the Futile Pursuit of the American Dream* (Metropolitan Books [2005], 175 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010; \$24.30). Ehrenreich tells what happens when she tries to land a public relations job in the \$50,000 range, including health insurance.

Ehrenreich exposes the rampant superficiality and uselessness in the "job transition industry." Within a few hours she meets a career coach who uses little dolls from *The Wizard of Oz* to assess personality types. Another uses "the horse, the driver and the carriage," which might derive from Plato but the career coach has no idea what the metaphor means. A few pages later Ehrenreich draws upon research to support her negative reaction to the popular Enneagram Personality Scale and to the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator.

This book is not as satisfying as *Nickel and Dimed*. Maybe it is the title, which presumes that career transition specialists are con artists. But that's not obviously so. Many sincerely

believe in their techniques and think they are honorably helping the unemployed.

Maybe the vacuousness in the career transition industry mirrors the economy. Not long ago, for example, your INITIATIVES' editor was invited to an overnight conference on evangelization sponsored by a Lake Michigan archdiocese. Participants learned about leadership using Disney characters. We stood in circles of five or six, playing the roles of Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy—all the while supposedly learning how to proclaim Jesus' gospel.

In an economy where production of tangible things is a small need, the ranks of the unemployed would swell if all the *total-waste-of-time* staff meetings, workshops, phone calls and seminars were eliminated.

Yes, some career transition consultants poorly serve the unemployed. But could it be that many of them, like the Lake Michigan archdiocese official who sponsors a Mickey Mouse seminar, are caught in an economy that needs pointless work?

To assist the unemployed, the National Center for the Laity (PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629) distributes *Spirituality of Work: Unemployed Workers* by Joe Gosse; free while supply lasts.

## **Taking the Initiative**

### *In Business*

Unfortunately, business culture is often associated with the Enron debacle and other scandals.

There was indeed incompetence, power mongering, greed and arrogance at Enron, details Kurt Eichenwald in *Conspiracy of Fools* (Broadway [2005] 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036; \$26). CEO Kenneth Lay comes off as clueless, Jeffrey Skilling is mentally ill and Andrew Fastow gives his soul to evil. There were breaches of ethics aplenty, including from office managers with nothing to gain.

But the bigger lesson of Enron, says reviewer Barbara Ley Toffler, is about the meaning of work, about "the love for the work we do." Enron was a company, says Toffler, "obsessed with the deals." It produced no real product nor delivered a needed service. It was about paychecks and other compensation; it was about its own soap opera with themes of sexual impropriety, betrayal and luxury. Bottom line: Top-to-bottom, "there was no pride in the job or

joy in the work of the company.” Without a sense of meaning, there can hardly be business ethics. (*Washington Post National Weekly*, 4/17/05)

Costco (999 Lake Dr., Issaquah, WA 98027) represents an alternate business culture. The full-time hourly wage averages \$17 plus benefits, including health care insurance, retirement plan and profit-sharing. About 85% of Costco’s workers use the company’s health insurance. Part-time employees can use the plan after six months on the job. Management salaries at Costco are capped. Unlike its largest competitor, Costco cooperates with unions. So what about its stock? Last year Costco rose more than 10%; its big competitor slipped 5% on the market. (*Business Week* [4/12/04], 1221 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 and *The Costco Challenge* by Moira Herbst, Labor Research Association, 330 W. 42<sup>nd</sup> St. #1300, New York, NY 10001; [www.laborresearch.org](http://www.laborresearch.org))

Whole Foods Market (550 Bowie St., Austin, TX 78703) has a culture somewhat similar to Costco. It is now trading at about \$135, up from \$4.25 in 1992 with a two-for-one split along the way. Its secret is not to make executive lifestyle its purpose. Instead, pay at Whole Foods is capped at 14 times the average pay of frontline workers. Employees have control of health insurance decisions. They choose the products carried in the stores. On the other hand, founder and CEO John Mackey is anti-union. Therefore employees do not have power to initiate changes, only to participate in those practices granted by management. (*The Longboat Observer*, 2/24/05)

The counter-opposite of Enron is the rapidly-selling *Joy At Work* by Dennis Bakke (PVG [2005], PO Box 70525, Seattle, WA 98127; \$24.95). Bakke draws upon experience as founder and CEO of AES Corporation (4300 Wilson Blvd. #1100, Arlington, VA 22203). Bakke believes that as decision-making and accountability are extended to all levels of a company, enjoyment and productivity follow.

Bakke believes that responsible business can be Christian ministry. However, he is unaware of any church that supports people “for their workplace ministry.” He once submitted the AES annual report to his pastor as part of Christian stewardship. Neither the pastor nor the congregation picked up on the gesture. The church never discusses “the need for accountability for the way we [serve] God through our secular work,” he concludes.

Bakke has a worthwhile message with implications for workers, customers, vendors, the community and especially for young adults who aspire to business. However, when AES suffered a setback in 2002 the stockholders blamed Bakke’s management style and he was forced to resign.

Short-term stock performance is the bugaboo in several efforts to create a moral business culture. *The Divine Right of Capital* by Marjorie Kelly (Berrett Koehler [2001], 235 Montgomery St. #650, San Francisco, CA 94104; \$17.95) is a fine introduction to the history and legalities of the stockholder domination of business. Kelly, by the way, edits a quarterly, *Business Ethics* (2845 Harriet Ave. #207, Minneapolis, MN 55408; [www.business-ethics.com](http://www.business-ethics.com)).

## Taking the Initiative

### *Our Daily Bread*

“We have lost something precious,” writes Sara Covin Juegnst. Our fast food culture makes it difficult to appreciate “the sacramental nature of the food we eat.” Juegnst urges families “to reclaim” thankfulness, hospitality, compassion and celebration at as many meals as possible. The aroma of those values starts to permeate a meal that begins with “the table blessing,” what Catholics call *grace before meals*. (*Presbyterians Today* [10/05], 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202)

The sacrament of eating is also jeopardized because farming and food processing are far removed from the kitchen or the restaurant. Recently, First Congregational United Church of Christ (1047 Curtiss St., Downers Grove, IL 60515) had a memorable dismissal rite. With the theme, *Jesus left the building and we followed*, 12 worshippers departed Illinois for Florida, where they met with farm workers. The group, which made a presentation to the entire congregation upon their return, learned about tomato pickers and others from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (PO Box 603, Immokalee, FL 34143; [www.ciw-online.org](http://www.ciw-online.org)).

*The Surprising Power of Family Meals* by Miriam Weinstein (Steerforth Press [2005], PO Box 70, South Royalton, VT 05068; \$22.95) supplies sociological evidence that a sacramental approach to eating is beneficial in this life. Specifically, Weinstein (who is not writing from a religious perspective) finds that family meals are linked to lower teenage drug and alcohol use,

a lower obesity rate, fewer serious asthma attacks, better reading skills and lots more.

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## Work and Art

Public life at the moment needs less moral righteousness, writes art critic Julia Keller. On the other hand, moral certainty “makes for great art” and we need more of it. Yet “instead of sharpness in art, increasingly we have ambiguity.”

Moral certainty in art, Keller explains, is not “stubborn smugness... Real moral certitude is a living, breathing, passionate thing.” In today’s chaos we need playwrights and novelists who can take raw episodes and “shape them into powerful stories... We need new moral thunder in movies and plays and TV shows and novels... We need the vigor of honest opinion, forged into artistic creations. We need writers willing to put everything they believe on the line.” (*Chicago Tribune*, 7/17/05)

Among those “writers willing to rile up the whole world on behalf of fiercely held convictions,” Keller admires the late Arthur Miller (1915-2005). Which leads INITIATIVES to ask: Who is today’s Arthur Miller? Who is writing hard-hitting morality tales?

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## North American Spirituality

*Msgr. Dan Cantwell (1915-1996)*

Placing “too exclusive an emphasis on the sanctification of the Lord’s Day can give the impression that the liturgy is something of an escape from attacking the hard social problems which face working people everyday of the week,” Cantwell told a 1949 National Liturgical Week audience. “Indeed we might seriously consider whether it is possible to restore all things in Christ on Sunday until we first show equal concern with the necessity of restoring dignity and human rights to the working lives of the multitudes.”

Cantwell--a pioneer in liturgical renewal and race relations, a seminary professor, a pastor and a chaplain to a residential facility for the retarded--died 10 years ago this coming January 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Cantwell was involved with Friendship House, the Catholic Worker, the Catholic Interracial Council (founding the Chicago chapter in 1945) and the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He founded the Catholic

Labor Alliance (later known as the Catholic Council on Working Life) and the Catholic Adult Education Centers, both of which are predecessor organizations of your National Center for the Laity, also founded by Cantwell.

It was 1977 when Cantwell was appointed to a committee of priests studying the state of the laity. Thinking it odd that only priests were on the committee, Cantwell added three women religious, four union officials, two attorneys, a judge, five newspaper reporters, three business executives, some homemakers, the chief of police and a few others to the committee. The result of their deliberation was *A Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern*, which argued that the laity as a force in the modern world is neglected amid all the positive post-Vatican II efforts to involve the laity in the internal ministry of the Church. “The ordinary roles through which the laity serve and act upon the world” are steadily depreciated,” Cantwell’s *Declaration* read. “The impression is often created that one can work for justice and peace only by stepping outside these ordinary roles as a business person, as a mayor, as a professional in the State Department or as an active union member.” The response to the *Declaration* was so overwhelming that the National Center for the Laity was formed in early 1978—at first simply to handle the mail. (The complete *Declaration* text appears in *Full-Time Christians* by Bill Droel, National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$8.50)

Cantwell was long disposed to Vatican II’s (1962-1965) teaching on the laity. “Long before the Council,” he later reflected, “life was changing at the grass roots. My altar was already turning around. The world of work, of drama, of music and of science was my world and, more importantly, God’s world.”

In 1936 Cantwell fell under the spell of his seminary rector, Msgr. Reynold Hillenbrand (1904-1979), a visionary who brought European insights about liturgy, small group process and social justice to the U.S. Cantwell, preaching at Hillenbrand’s funeral, recalled how Cardinal George Mundelein (1872-1939) introduced the new rector to the students: “I have brought you a man with imagination.”

The spiritual life, Cantwell often explained, was too often associated with renouncing the world or at least with a view of “work as somehow a spiritual encumbrance.” Cantwell mentions the very popular *The Imitation of Christ* by Fr. Thomas a Kempis (Random House [1418], 201 E. 50<sup>th</sup> St. #2200,

New York, NY 10022; \$12) that in a typical passage says, God “instructs [us] to despise earthly things, to loath things present.”

To counter such thinking, Cantwell hung this quotation from Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) in an office: “Christians are not *of the world* but they are *in the world*, as really and profoundly as any [person] can be. They must be secluded from nothing, save from evil... Everything valuable for [people] and for the human mind belongs to them who belong to Christ.”

Through Hillenbrand and others, Cantwell caught a Vatican II theology years before the Council. “Nothing God decides to do can be beneath God,” Cantwell preached. Therefore, if God became fully human, God from all eternity was at ease with human joy and human striving. The church, in Cantwell’s words, is not aloof from or opposed to the world. In fact, “the church needs the world. The church is in the here-and-now. It is supposed to build a human world in our moment of time. The church shares questions with the world, with the rest of the human family...God is not unhappy with modernity, not unhappy that we have put a person on the moon, that we are trying to eliminate patriarchy in the church and in married life...I am more and more convinced that the secular is the sacred, that the service of the laity is every bit as important to God as the service of the ordained.”

Cantwell, always soft-spoken, was an urban mystic. Nonetheless, Cantwell got into fights, notably in the cause of racial inclusion.

Ten years before the Montgomery bus boycott, Cantwell’s Catholic Interracial Council campaigned to integrate Catholic hospitals. Cantwell took on the cause after his friend Dorothy Day (1897-1980) required hospitalization during a visit to Chicago. She was admitted to a hospital operated by women religious. Her doctor happened to be Arthur Falls (1901-2000), a prominent black who started the first Catholic Worker house in Chicago. However, even though the nuns admired Day, they would not on racial grounds allow Falls into the hospital. (A compromise was reached. A doctor affiliated with the hospital said Falls was his assistant.)

In 1959 a developer decided to sell a small number of his new, middle-class, suburban homes to blacks. Some nearby residents--members of Cantwell’s CIC and other groups--actively supported the decision, while other residents, including the local Catholic pastor,

opposed integrating the suburb. Cantwell tried to win over the pastor, but was rebuffed. Cantwell then went to the bishop, Cardinal Albert Meyer (1903-1965). At that moment Meyer was also concerned about segregation in his Catholic high schools.

Meyer, accepting advice from a couple of pastors, called for a two-day clergy conference on the topic of race relations. (There are still annual clergy conferences in Chicago. The topics are often inward focused. In INITIATIVES’ opinion priests’ morale might be better served by a hard-hitting clergy conference on the social gospel.)

Priests would be turned off by Cantwell’s own predictable remarks or those of fellow Hillenbrand disciple Msgr. Jack Egan (1916-2001), Cantwell sensed. Instead he told Meyer to get some younger priests to lead discussions. But most importantly, Cantwell advised the cardinal to address the priests personally, in the strongest possible terms. Cantwell and Egan then drafted Meyer’s talk. “We must,” Meyer told his priests, “remove from the church on the local scene any possible taint of racial discrimination or racial segregation...[Therefore,] every Catholic child [regardless of race] must have equal access to our schools...on all levels of our academic training.” Further, pastors will cooperate with reasonable plans to integrate their parishes. Should it be necessary, Meyer concluded, for any pastor to have a further explanation of these points, I shall always be happy to discuss race relations with him. (*This Confident Church* by Fr. Steve Avella, University of Notre Dame Press [1992], Notre Dame, IN 46556; \$43.43)

Moe Foner, who along with Leon Davis and Elliot Godoff, transformed a pharmacy union into one for nurses and other hospital workers, was in 1959 at loggerheads with the New York Hospital Association. “We made it clear to the workers [many of whom were black] that the union could guarantee them nothing,” Foner recalled. The difficulties ahead might “include injunctions and jail sentences.” To bolster the workers and influence public opinion, Foner bought an ad in the *N.Y. Times* in which he quoted “a Catholic dignitary: a Msgr. Cantwell,” who in those days “was talking about the importance of the right to have a union for workers in hospitals.”

Cantwell applied his convictions about justice and inclusion to the priesthood, once preaching in favor of women’s ordination at a

formal occasion in the presence of Cardinal John Cody (1907-1982).

In the late 1980s Cantwell tangled with some so-called *experts* on the way to the World Synod on the Laity. “Don’t squeeze the agenda,” he warned them. The Synod is a flop “if it issues just another know-it-all pronouncement. The church is not Noah’s Ark, affording security and preoccupied with internal needs. It is Jesus walking on the water, bravely aware of the opposing winds, inviting others to not be afraid out here.”

Cantwell was pleased that prior to the Synod his National Center for the Laity hosted the only independent preparatory session in the U.S. “Don’t go to Rome,” he admonished the U.S. bishops (some of whom attended the NCL meeting), “and tell the pope that the National Center for the Laity invented the words *lay, clergy, ministry, secular, sacred* and the multitude of distinctions implied in them. It is crucial that you bishops listen to men and women who find God as they repair automobiles, write a sonnet, discover a healing treatment, create children, establish a business, support a spouse and dance a ballet.”

Cantwell, for all his conviction, was never brash. He was very loyal. “The temptation to say *To hell with the Church* is in the air around us these days,” he admitted. “But that is a comfortably self-righteous feeling and makes the church something impersonal. For me to say *The hell with my bishop* is really an admission of failure on my part to work with a human being who has at once strengths and limitations. To give in to such a temptation is an intellectual and moral weakness.”

Cantwell was an effective preacher because he gently appreciated human

complexity. For example, recalls Hugh Schulze, Cantwell could admit that his feelings did not always match his convictions. “I have a difficult time thinking of God as a woman,” Cantwell began one homily. He could not feel the feminine metaphor like he felt God as *shepherd* or *rock* or *fortress*. “Our own imagination can limit us in realizing the possibilities that exist in God,” Cantwell explicated.

Another time the choir had just sung *Amazing Grace*. Very quietly Cantwell repeated its famous line: “That saved a wretch like me.” Quieter still, he pointed to himself: “Am I a wretch?” Then he pointed to someone in the congregation: “Are you a wretch?” He drifted down the aisle, pointing to others and asking the same question. Retracing his steps, he said to each: “You have the kingdom of God inside of you.” Returning to the pulpit, Cantwell concluded a short, memorable homily: “I always hated that hymn.”

There’s a wine auction in Chicago each year to benefit The Vineyard Home for Mentally Challenged (101 Cantwell Ct., Purgitsville, WV 26852), founded in 1983 by Cantwell and Robert & Ruth Pliska. Cantwell’s papers are at the Chicago Historical Society (Clark St. at North Ave., Chicago, IL 60614). He is buried at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, IL.

“God’s milieu is here and now,” Cantwell constantly said. “It seems to me that unless we really love life right now for what it really is, we will never grow to attain the full measure of life that God wants us to have in eternity. To aim toward the greater life to come is not to despise the present life. It is precisely when we begin to appreciate the marvelous life we now have that we also begin to realize how much more God has in store for us.”

## Happenings

The United Farm Workers (PO Box 62, Keene, CA 93531; [www.ufw.org](http://www.ufw.org)) has settled its contract dispute with Gallo Wines. The UFW thanks INITIATIVES’ readers for boycotting Gallo products, but now asks us to drink Carlo Rossi, Turning Leaf and other Gallo brands.

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (141 Bruce Ave., Paducah, KY 42001; [dmgrief@peoplepc.com](mailto:dmgrief@peoplepc.com)) has launched a newsletter, *The Rank and File Catholic*. The inaugural issue profiles Fr. Mark Buckner, whose vocation carried him through a dozen years as a plumber, then an interest in social work and now as a pastor and a prison chaplain.

Religious groups that drift into electoral politics often get identified with one or another party. Christians in Politics (PO Box 38539, London SW1H 0WX, England; [www.christiansinpolitics.org.uk](http://www.christiansinpolitics.org.uk)), a new venture by “three recognized Christian groups” affirm positive tendencies that course through the major political parties in England, Conservative, Labor and Liberal/Democrat.

“A Calling To Justice: Exploring Social Justice in the Professions and Disciplines” is a February 25, 2006 conference at Loyola University (820 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611; [nmaher@luc.edu](mailto:nmaher@luc.edu)).

The Coalition for Ministry in Daily Life (708 W. Eighth St., Claremont, CA 91711; [www.dailylifeministry.org](http://www.dailylifeministry.org)) will hold its annual conference April 21-23, 2005 in Pasadena, CA. Your National Center for the Laity is helping plan this conference.

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The National Center for the Laity is an independent, 501-C-3 organization, founded on April 10, 1978 following the overwhelming reaction to an Advent 1977 statement, *A Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern*. The National Center for the Laity relies on donations.

The officers of the NCL include Tom Donnelly, Bill Droel, John Hazard, Faustin Pipal Jr., and Vaile Scott (president). Other board members include Mike Beckman, Nicole Kramer, Terry Mambu and Phil Moore. In addition, the NCL has 11 national advisors and about 4,000 friends.

“Christ dwells among the pots and pans.” –St. Teresa of Avila