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Call to Action' call to healing

Thomas C. Fox | Nov. 6, 2009 NCR Today

This is the weekend progressive-minded Catholics from throughout the nation trek to Milwaukee for Call to Action's annual gathering. It's a weekend of workshops, talks, exhibits, with plenty of time for old friends to gather over coffee, tea -- and to share stories and renew friendships and hopes. After all, it can get lonely out there in some parishes.

With the "restoration" of a pre-Vatican II church going full speed ahead at the top of the food chain the ?what might have been"-ers need some place to come together just to catch their collective breaths and souls.

I used to think that the two thousand plus who come to the annual CTA gathering come to be energized. That's still true. (I once called Call To Action the "the primary engine of church reform" and then found my words showing up in CTA marketing booklets.) I still believe this November weekend, with chilly Lake Michigan wind gusts bringing tears to the eys, is a delightful way to remember some of the reasons we've gotten up all these mornings. Renewed energy, yes. People who come here come like the fix.

And they leave remembered they are not alone, that Vatican II lives, though sometimes in some locations more in mind than matter,

But now I think I've realized there is something else a play here. This year's CTA conference booklet states that "Call To Action continues its work in creating an inclusive and just Church." Yes, it continues to do this. No doubt. But that something else is taking place at another level of spirit. And I think it has something to do with a

fundamental need we all have -- to be healed.

The folks who come here have been hurt, really hurt, in many ways by their church, a church that has turned on them as they have tried to live out its call faithfully, a clergy who have virtually banished them for their care and compassion. Some CTA types have literally been driven out of parishes, others forced out of ministries and careers. Hurt, really hurt. And they come here, recognizing it or not, in need of healing. And the CTA weekend provides this healing. CTA as healer. I like it. Think of it.

I'm not an expert at deciphering the gospels, but it seems to me that Jesus was a healer. And if a CTA weekend in Milwaukee offers a bit of solace and hope, well, that's not bad at all.

So if CTA never quite gets there. If our church renewal does not happen in out lifetimes, so be it. But we can help each other, support each other, and, yes, help heal the wounds. Let the weekend begin.

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