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Encounter 2017 gathering in NYC blends talks, music, spirituality

Catholic News Service December 31, 2016
CONTRIBUTOR



Pope Francis greets a child as he arrives to lead an audience with the Communion and Liberation movement in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican March 7. (CNS photo/Giampiero Sposito, Reuters.)

Holly Peterson, director of communications for Communion and Liberation in New York, said the event, now in its ninth year, hopes to provide "a place of dialogue and friendship with everyone and anyone, in the heart of the city."

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NEW YORK - Members of the Catholic lay ecclesial movement Communion and Liberation are gearing up for their annual gathering in New York City, a three-day event featuring lectures, music and socializing.

Labeled a “cultural event,” the free gathering takes place Jan. 13-15 in New York City and features talks by scientists, writers, economists as well as exhibits and music.

“It’s a blend of music and culture a lot of talk about different Catholic topics,” said Father Drew Curry, from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in Indiana, who attended the event in 2013.

Holly Peterson, director of communications for Communion and Liberation in New York, said the event, now in its ninth year, hopes to provide “a place of dialogue and friendship with everyone and anyone, in the heart of the city - which it truly is, in the heart of Manhattan.”

Those who participate in the annual event, called Encounter, “have the unique experience of seeing proposals from a diversity of people, from all walks of life; discussions that are not afraid to look at the depth of life, from 360 degrees, and to speak about it together,” Peterson told Catholic News Service.

Nathaniel Hurd, who has been in the Communion and Liberation movement since 2014, first attended the event in 2010.

“The New York Encounter embodies for me the church’s love of whatever is true, beautiful, and interesting, and therefore helps intensify our relationship with Christ,” said Hurd.

“At the heart of the New York Encounter is the fact that people are given to us to see Christ - the fullness of reality - more clearly and to follow him. New friendships begin, old friendships deepen and strangers become witnesses.

“Hopefully, these relationships and ways of looking at concrete aspects of our lives will continue to point us to him throughout the year.”

The gathering features 27 events on topics such as whether it’s possible to have an economy with a truly human purpose, as the pope has often called for, as well having a healthy relationship with food, and the relevance of the saints in modern times.

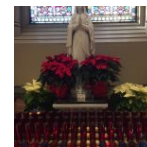


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The event tries to capture some of the thinking behind the Communion and Liberation movement, said Curry, which is that the spiritual is immersed with the material, that faith and reason can meet.

The movement was founded in Italy in 1954 and is aimed at educating members in Christian maturity and collaborating with the church's mission in contemporary life.

"We live in a society where faith is going to church but faith and reason are united and help each other," Curry said. The event helps some see that Catholicism isn't just a way of praying but it involves a lot of other actions.

"We encounter Christ, not just in some spiritual or emotional way but it's all these things," said Curry.

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