



New York Encounter 2016: Final Statement

8,500 attendees, 23 conferences, 6 exhibits, 2 original shows, and the 7th edition *New York Encounter* was underway. The theme of this annual three-day cultural event, *Longing for the Sea and yet [Not] Afraid*, drawn from Edgar Lee Masters' poem *George Grey*, reflected the optimism and boldness with which one who has his desire intact, enters life. In a world which, as **John Waters** noted in the final event of the *Encounter*, bears more doubt than faith, where "the din of the outside...dampens our heart so that we cannot feel it, it is important that we get this circuitry going again;" that we come together and are reminded to see and hear things new again.

Friday night, that poetic genius of **Christian Wiman** opened the *Encounter* with words of clarity and hope, where "the problem of believing is a problem of overcoming skepticism." The following day, **Nancy Albin** and **Andreas Widmer** told how, following their hearts, they built their businesses from untethered desire. The freedom found in following one's heart was echoed in **Priscilla LaPorte** and **Joshua Stancil's** testimonies, two people who live tranquility in suffering because of friendships which accompanied their hope. Astronaut Tom Jones spoke of the unlimited nature of desire which sent him to the stars, while **Sean Cardinal O'Malley** and **Jeffery Sachs** expressed the limitless goodness of humans interconnected with all things below. Sunday morning took the theme to another level, focusing on the untethered freedom of belonging to the companionship of the Church. Opening the day with liturgy by **Cardinal O'Malley**, **Fr. Julian Carrón**, **Msgr. Ronald Marino**, and **Giulio Piscitelli** continued the theme of freedom and belonging. The poignant stories of **Fr. Pier Batista Pizzaballa** and **Archbishop Amel Nona**, witnessed to the tragedies in the Middle East, and uncanny hope, joy, and- yes—unexpected freedom that comes from following the design of Another. One refugee family in Erbil, via video, offered the 1,000 people in attendance a simple hypothesis to overcome fear in life: faith, not intended as set of rules, but as a loving relationship with a living Presence.

The Human Adventure Series put the spotlight on bold workers who work for people in the areas of health (**Med-Conference**), education (**TeachCollab**), business (**Snaidero**), and in edification through literature (**Well Read Mom**).

Every exhibit of the *Encounter*—from the **Explorers of the Solar System** to trail-blazing missionary **St. Junípero Serra**, to the witness of **Christians in the Middle East** and **Africa**, to the poetry and music of **Guareschi** and **Jannacci**—told the story of men and women who followed an attraction, a desire, so great that it overcame all fear of "drowning in the open seas that our hearts yearn[ed] for."

As the *Encounter* ended, we were reminded by **Riro Maniscalco** that, yes, there is definitively a longing in life, an attraction to take to the sea and go, spurred on by a promise of happiness ("boats, though safe in the harbor, are not made to remain there.") Yet, as the testimonies and contributions showed over and over again, for this attraction to beat our fear, we need a companion, a friend, someone who is familiar with sailing and with whom we can take on the open waters. Alone, we cannot make it. Together, we can set sail. Finding this companion is the drama of everyone's life.