

Initiatives

In Support of Christians in the World

National Center for the Laity
PO Box 291102
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www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm

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50 Years since Vatican II

John Ryan of Oak Park IL, a longtime friend of National Center for the Laity, reflects on Vatican II (1962-1965) and the Chicago scene.

The seeds for Vatican II and subsequent lay-based communities in dialogue with the world were planted before World War II in Belgium, where the Young Christian Workers movement was founded by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn. Clergy, students and workers began to integrate their faith with their work through YCW and Young Christian Students. Change was in the wind, as lay people provided leadership and these movements expanded, eventually attracting a loyal following in Chicago.

Then 51 years ago a roly-poly, charismatic Pope John XXIII announced a Council of bishops. This meeting unleashed a burst of energy into a sleepy, traditional and self-absorbed church. Vatican II validated the pioneering work of groups like YCW and YCS.

Like many young couples of that time, my wife Joan and I caught this sense of renewal, this opportunity to partner with progressive clergy and religious. Little did we know that Chicago would become one of the *green fields* for revitalizing a church which had become inbred, hierarchical and defensive.

We had heroes during those heady times. When John XXIII opened the windows, we heard from young, progressive clergy like Bishop Leo Joseph Suenens, Fr. Yves Congar, OP, Fr. John Courtney Murray, SJ, Fr. Hans Kung, Fr. Karl Rahner, SJ and Fr. Charles Curran on their participation at the Council or on Vatican II themes. Murray in particular helped the church understand its unique role and expectations in modern society, including the U.S.

In Chicago we saw the emergence of lay-based organizations like CANA, Catholic Interracial Council, Catholic Adult Education Centers and Friendship House, as well as affiliates of international organizations like the YCW and YCS. Several Chicago organizations

were headquartered in an old building at 21 W. Superior. On any given day, 21 West was home to a remarkable group of talented people, lay and clergy, including the distinguished scholar, Fr. John McKenzie, SJ who helped develop CAEC's Summer Institute of Biblical Studies.

Chicago was blessed at the time by two Cardinals who, in sequence, not only encouraged the formation of lay organizations, but gifted them with the energy and leadership of local clergy advisers. Initially Cardinal Samuel Stritch made some of these priests *Monsignori*, which gave them a degree of clout. His successor, Cardinal Albert Meyer, continued to support lay leadership. Priests who served as chaplains during those exciting times are now legendary: Msgr. Bill Quinn, Msgr. Jack Egan, Msgr. John Hayes, Msgr. Dan Cantwell, Walter Imborski, Fr. Dennis Geaney, OSA, James Killgallon and Msgr. George Higgins. Fr. Leo Mahon was another, but at the direction of Meyer he went off to establish an experimental church in Panama. Several of these priests were in Mundelein Seminary during the late 1930s and early 1940s when Msgr. Reynold Hillenbrand was the dynamic rector.

Lay people who rose to the challenge of leadership in these Chicago organizations were a remarkable and feisty bunch, including: Ed Marciniak, Russ Barta, Gene Callahan, Monroe Sullivan, Bob Senser, Vaile Scott, Tony Zivalich, Matt Ahman and John McDermott.

It was certainly not an *old boys club*, with the presence and energy of Patty Crowley, Patsy Ballinger, Sr. Candida Lund, OP, Peggy Roach, Sr. Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, Ruth Parrington, Virginia Marciniak, Bernice Barta, Ann Byrne, Nina Polcyn Moore, Anne Zimmerman, Lois Schumacher Marrone, Carolyn Pezzulo, Jean Pew, Tesse Donnelly and Gerri Brauneis among others.

Joan and I became involved with the Catholic Adult Education Centers, and along with the Donnelly's, set up and ran a site at St. Edmund's in Oak Park, where we offered a variety of evening programs in film studies, readings from "God and Man in the Modern World" and "World Affairs." Eventually there

were 12 of these sites in the Chicago area, and enrollment reached 2,500. Most of our discussion leaders were lay people, all volunteers.

The glory days of these organizations came to an end when Cardinal John Cody rode into town and put the squeeze on lay-based activities, knowing he could not control them.

From my standpoint, the St. Giles Family Mass Community in Oak Park, a distinct small community within the larger parish, is one outgrowth of YCW and YCS, one small group energized by Vatican II. Its lay leaders put their mark on the church in Chicago. We at the Family Mass owe thanks to people like Tesse and Bill Donnelly, Marietta and Bob Walsh, and others who had the foresight and courage to start the Family Mass in 1971, and keep it going for 38 years--a remarkable accomplishment.

Taking the Initiative

For Local Economy

INITIATIVES' reader Dan Houston (Civic Economics, 4302 Ave. D, Austin, TX 78751; www.civiceconomics.com) says New Orleans could add \$235million to its economy if residents shifted just 10% of their spending away from national chains to local businesses. In other towns a 10% shift could create more than 1,000 jobs.

The *buy local strategy* does not result in the loss of \$235million from another town's economy or the loss of 1,000 jobs somewhere else. Capitalism is not a zero-sum game. Wealth and jobs are created the more that money changes hands—which happens more rapidly when money circulates locally. Most U.S. towns are a long way from a plateau in this dynamic.

Amesbury is the northern-most town in Massachusetts. Its textile mills, carriage shops and factories are mostly long gone. To attract new business the town uses promotional mailings, tax considerations and the like, plus a new campaign called Amesbury First (5 Market Sq., Amesbury, MA 01913; www.amesburyfirst.com). It asks residents to shop locally in order to stabilize existing business. Simultaneously, outside firms that benefit from some local consumption find relocation to the town attractive.

The Small Mart Revolution by Michael Shuman (through Berrett Koehler [2008], 235 Montgomery St. #650, San Francisco, CA 94104; \$25.99) details the buy local strategy.

E.F. Schumacher Society (140 Jug End Rd., Great Barrington, MA 01230; www.schumachersociety.org) is a hub for information. (*Christian Science Monitor* [11/15/09], 210 Massachusetts Ave., Boston, MA 02115)

A worker co-op is a related strategy. Sam Simon, who happens to be an orthopedic surgeon, became a dairy farmer not far from the east bank of the Hudson River. He quickly realized that he could not compete with mega-farms. He then founded Hudson Valley Fresh (47 S. Hamilton St., Poughkeepsie, NY 12601; www.hudsonvalleyfresh.com), a co-op of eight family farms. Their premium milk sells above the name brands but below organics. Customers must be within about 80 miles of the co-op. By industry standards the milk is of higher quality and leaves a smaller carbon footprint. (*N.Y. Times*, 2/8/10)

There are resources for the co-op movement including U.S. Federation of Worker Coops (PO Box 170701, San Francisco, CA 94117; www.usworker.coop), University of Wisconsin Center for Coops (427 Lorch St. #Taylor 230, Madison, WI 53706; www.uwcc.wisc.edu) and the cyber-only Grassroots Economic Organizing (www.geo.coop). The United Nations (15 Route des Morillons, 1218 Grand Saconnex, Geneva Switzerland; www.un.org) proclaims 2012 as "International Year of Coops."

Consumers can most easily support a local economy through food and beverage choices. Thus, for example, your INITIATIVES' editor always orders the local brew on tap, including New Glarus when in Wisconsin, Genesee at many places east of Interstate 77, the ecologically brewed Brooklyn Pennant Ale when in the City, and Chicago's Goose Island back at home.

INITIATIVES itself uses local business, including Central Printer and Graphics (6109 W. 63rd St., Chicago, IL 60638; www.centralprintersinc.com), just west of Midway Airport and Rescigno's Mailing Solutions (7501 W. 85th St., Bridgeview, IL 60455; www.rescignos.com), not far from the coast-to-coast U.S. Route 20.

Taking the Initiative

On Campus

United Students Against Sweatshops (1150 17th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036; www.usas.org) has chapters in over 250 North

American colleges, plus an outreach to high schools. Hundreds of chapter leaders met recently in Knoxville to share experiences.

Bob Senser, author of *Justice at Work* (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$15), has followed USAS since its inception. He is impressed that “despite a built-in annual turnover” among students, the activists have “unremitting dedication.” Further, USAS struggles “for the rights not of its *own* members but of others—mostly women they will never know personally.”

Russell Athletic (1 Fruit of the Loom Dr., Bowling Green, KY 42103) makes sports apparel and equipment bearing college logos. However, the company was thwarting worker rights in its Honduras facility. Through student persistence, nearly 100 colleges cancelled licensing arrangements with Russell Athletic. Guess what? Russell Athletic reversed its policies in January. (*Human Rights for Workers* [2 / 1 0 / 1 0] , <http://humanrightsforworkers.blogspot.com>)

Taking the Initiative *In Business*

Sometimes newly hired executives wash out—either quickly or over several months. The process is like an organ transplant, says Fr. William Byron, SJ in *Faith-Based Reflections on American Life* (Paulist Press [2010], 997 MacArthur Blvd., Mahwah, NJ 07430; \$14.95). For a time the host body will try to reject the transplant. The transition is successful only if the new executive becomes “comfortably enculturated.”

In one the book’s 79 short “reflections” Byron names the qualities of a successful business leader in today’s climate. She or he has to exhibit a measure of calculated vulnerability while being decisive “when the timing is right.” A leader also has to display *tough empathy*, believing that the expectation of quality work is respect. A leader is vulnerable, available and accountable.

Church leaders usually approach business executives with an eye on a donation. Bishops and other Church employees could, however, learn how to minister more effectively through genuine dialogue with executives. In that regard Byron highlights National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management (1350 Connecticut Ave. NW #825, Washington, DC 20036; www.nlrcm.org). Through meetings and resources it avails Church leaders of business

competencies.

Taking the Initiative *In Theology*

The National Center for the Laity wonders why so few theologians—at least in the U.S.—write and teach about work. Admittedly, several explore themes in Catholic social thought, and these writers get regular attention in INITIATIVES. Meanwhile, increasingly in recent months, lots of attention is given to theology regarding lay Church employees—the daily work of a small minority.

Andrew Dinan of Ave Maria University points to St. Basil the Great (329-379), a leading figure in Christian monasticism, as one source for reflection on work. (*Logos* [Fall/09], 2115 Summit Ave. #55S, St. Paul, MN 55105)

To set the stage Dinan says the elite in ancient Greece and Rome were contemptuous of ordinary work. Christianity did not share such a view, yet was influenced by it. Thus work was often understood as at best backdrop to the spiritual life, if not a punishment for sin. The highest calling, some Christians thought, was to contemplative asceticism—a lifestyle removed from daily toil.

Basil, who was born into wealth and embarked on a promising career in the law and education, rejected any elitist posture and in fact anticipated later developments in the theology of work. His turn to monasticism was derided by some—all the more so when he taught that manual labor actually fosters the spiritual life.

Genesis is sometimes misread to say that work is a punishment for the fall. But Basil finds “the notion of God as an artisan” in *Genesis*. God’s creation is a workshop. Of course, Dinan says, human laborers differ from God, who creates *ex nihilo*. But otherwise people are imitating God as they extend creation.

Christians are sometimes told that busyness is an antidote to idleness or occasions of sin. Basil’s theology was more profound, Dinan concludes. Basil understood the primary purpose of work is the spiritual perfection of the worker. “So great is Basil’s emphasis on the subjective dimension of work that he even stipulates that the products of [disgruntled workers] are to be rejected.” Admiration of the quality of work leads to “praise and love” of the worker.

As one contribution to the theology of work, our NCL distributes *Pope John Paul II’s Gospel of Work* by Bill Droel (National Center

for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$8.25)

Work and Art

“The modern world of work,” writes novelist John Lanchester, is not represented in literary fiction. This is “startlingly...given how many people define themselves through work and how central work is to many people’s self-description.” In today’s literary fiction “a job tends to be as much a marginal detail of a character’s life as her hair color.” It wasn’t always such, he says. In the 19th century there were many “great books that describe work,” including those by Herman Melville (1819-1891), Emile Zola (1840-1902), Charles Dickens (1812-1870), Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) and others.

Certain workplaces are backdrops in today’s popular fiction, especially in television plots. There are lots of stories set in hospitals, offices and around police stations. But work in these popular stories is quite unrealistic.

A serious regard for work does not appear in literary fiction, says Lanchester, because “the complexity of modern working lives is too much.” To adequately describe the details of many work settings would weigh down the flow of any serious novel. (*Telegraph* [1/29/10], www.telegraph.com.uk and *N.Y. Times Book Review*, 3/14/10)

Lanchester became interested in our financial crisis and thought about writing a novel. The complex settings discouraged him. Instead he departed from fiction to produce a readable non-fiction account, *IOU: Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay* (Simon & Schuster [2010], 1230 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 10020; \$25).

Can INITIATIVES’ readers suggest recent novels in which work plays a significant part?

Work Prayers

Before Dinner

“O God, you are the source of all our comforts and to you we give thanks for this food. But we also remember in gratitude the many men and women whose labor was necessary to produce it, and who gathered it from the land and from the sea for our sustenance. May they too enjoy the fruit of their labor without want, and may they also be [joined] with us in communion

of thankful hearts.” – Rev. Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) in *The Spirit* (5830 S. 92nd St., Hales Corners, WI 53130; Spring/10)

The Great Workbench

“Work is participation in God’s ongoing creation and participation in Christ’s redemption,” says our National Center for the Laity’s *Principles for Lay Initiative*. “Good work is the way women and men, individually and collectively, offer their best to the earthly city and to the City of God. Work itself is capable of contributing to the spiritual life.” (*Church Chicago Style* by Bill Droel, NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$8.25)

Lauren Sukal, a board member of NCL, reflects on that statement in light of the current recession:

For the past year, my friend studied the software known as Skype while training someone in China with the understanding that her company was growing. One morning she was told the company wasn’t growing at all; the company was sold and operations moved overseas. She was abruptly laid off. She had just skyped herself out of a job.

Like most people, my friend doesn’t have huge savings. She now fills out unemployment paperwork and spends her days searching for a job. My friend has a support system to help her through this crisis. Many people don’t.

This is a crisis that began in shadows and whispers, but is now heard in glaring, deafening cries at local social service agencies, church run food banks, and suicide hotlines.

In this country 6.3 million workers are now unemployed for more than six months--more workers than at any time since World War II. This number, says the *N.Y. Times* (2/20/10), “is more than double the toll in the next-worst period.” These long-term unemployed join another nearly nine million who are, so far, unemployed for a shorter period. The *N.Y. Times* calls them “the new poor.” They are “people long accustomed to the comforts of middle-class life” who now suffer under long-term unemployment, mortgage difficulty and more. Even when markets begin to improve, the *N.Y. Times* continues, ordinary workers will remain mired in a jobless recovery because of an “unusual constellation” of economic and cultural trends. At the very moment when the global economy prizes abstract thinking, U.S. young adults are falling behind educationally. A

decline in labor contracts in favor of contingent employment depresses wages and benefits. Outsourced jobs are not returning to these shores. Automation, including in the service industry, means fewer people doing the job. Finally, investors and managers are thoroughly addicted to short-term results making layoffs a normal, not a regrettable, management style.

The trauma of the current recession “will remain heavy for quite some time,” explains Don Peck. Unemployed workers and society at large will be affected by this “pervasive joblessness” long after the market improves. The fallout will shape “family, politics and society.”

Peck links our wave of unemployment to measurable trends, including strains in family relations. There is “less engagement in religious life and the old civic organizations.” The lifetime earnings of recent college graduates are permanently lessened. There is less independent thinking among young workers. And there is an increase in anti-immigrant feeling, a decline in concern for the poor, more class resentment and generally more incivility. (*The Atlantic* [3/10], 600 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008)

Back in December the U.S. House passed a \$154 billion Jobs for Main Street Act (HR 2847). The headline points to a rare show of bi-partisanship: “With G.O.P. Help, Senate Advances Jobs Bill.” The bill gives tax consideration to small businesses that hire the unemployed, supports bonds for transportation construction and more. (*N.Y. Times*, 2/22/10 & 3/16/10) This is positive news...but is it enough?

More public and private investment is needed for U.S. infrastructure, more spending on roads and bridges, spending for green sector jobs. Teachers, police officers, firefighters, counselors and others who provide services need steady employment.

It’s been almost 50 years since Vatican II. From our website, NCL (www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm) describes the central Vatican II message in this way: “That the people of God live their vocations in the everyday world of science, industry, commerce, politics, around the home, on the postal route, in the classroom, and the emergency room.” We help those affected by tragedies by, for example, taking up a second collection at Mass. In a similar way we can come together around unemployment and, for example, encourage compassionate business owners and legislators

to create employment.

NCL asks: “How is the church present to the world?” Our mission focuses on a grass roots level to help people stay on their feet until the situation improves and to stimulate local employment however possible.

News and Views

“It is very important to insist,” writes Pope John XXIII (1881-1963), that bishops not equate the gospel with “human judgments in the political sphere.” My fellow bishops are “exposed to the temptation of meddling immoderately in matters that are not their concern,” he continues. I “must admonish them not to...declare for one section or faction rather than another.” (*Journal of a Soul* [1964], Doubleday, 1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019; \$27)

There is a line between announcing moral principles and “addressing that concern in a particular way,” writes Jeffrey Mirus (Trinity Communications, 9200 Church St. #201, Manassas, VA 20110; www.catholicculture.org). The bishops certainly “have a superior grasp of Catholic moral principles.” Yet they have no more “grasp of how effectively this or that public policy embodies those principles” than any other informed citizen. “In fact,” Mirus continues, “both by training and experience one would expect politically active lay persons to have a better grasp of the art of the possible in implementing effective public policy.” (*This Rock* [12/09], PO Box 199000, San Diego, CA 92159)

It is not enough for bishops who are commenting on specific legislation to say that they employ research staff and lobbyists who are politically savvy. The error regarding the bishops’ partisan politicking goes to the essence of Catholic ecclesiology. Every time a bishop or a Church employee (while on the clock) crosses the line and endorses a partisan policy or nods toward a candidate or political party, they usurp the role of the laity in the world.

The National Center for the Laity does not desire a dualistic view of the church: Clergy restricted to the altar while lay people plunge unsupported into the messy world. The NCL says Church employees have a major role to play in the quest for peace, justice and the dignity of all human life. Likewise lay leaders have responsibility to assist in the parish and within our liturgy. NCL also admits there are some *close calls* and some *emergency situations* where

a Church employee might wade into partisan politics.

The bishops might say, for example, that the health care reform debate is an emergency and that no one else is adequately upholding the right to life. The NCL certainly admits that the laity is slumbering; that much more formation and animation is needed. However, it is not true that the bishops are the only conscientious people able to influence policy. There are in fact many informed Catholics in and around Congress.

NCL is also aware that bishops have to *correct the record* when an elected official misrepresents Catholic teaching on life—a

matter which by the way is not a peculiar Catholic custom but applies by its nature to all. Likewise, bishops should correct those who distort Catholic teaching on labor relations and other doctrines.

Again, there are exceptions. On the whole, however, NCL feels that frequently our bishops are “meddling immoderately” in partisan politics. It is bad theology and ultimately counterproductive for the causes the whole church espouses.

Happenings

Celebration (115 E. Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111; <http://celebrationpublications.org/conference2010>) hosts a conference in Chicago “on effective liturgy,” July 21-23, 2001. “The renewal of the liturgy,” says *Celebration*, “is not about rubrics but about hospitality, about welcoming people within-and-without to share God’s love for the world.” Presenters include Gabe Huck, Sr. Theresa Kane, RSM, Grayson Warren Brown and others.

Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (Davis Fisher, 1316 Maple Ave. #A1, Evanston, IL 60201; www.pcusatentmakers.org) holds its annual meeting November 12-14, 2010 at Chicago’s St. Mary of the Lake Seminary. The organization supports the ordained who, like St. Paul the Tentmaker, also work for a living. Smile. It encourages the ordained to be attuned to daily work.

Websites, Blogs and Resources

Journal of Religion and Business Ethics (DePaul University, 2327 N. Racine Ave. #203, Chicago, IL 60614; <http://via.library.depaul.edu/jrbe>) uniquely addresses marketplace issues within “the more inclusive scope of religious ethics” as contrasted to philosophical ethics. The inaugural issue has articles by National Center for the Laity friends Robert G. Kennedy and Michael Naughton among others. The editors are Tom O’Brien and Scott Paeth.

Brian McDonough (Hage Hodes, 440 Hanover St., Manchester, NH 03104; bmcdonough@hagehodes.com) has a 645-page cyber-compilation of papal writing on economic justice from Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* to the latest from Pope Benedict XVI. McDonough will soon have a similar compilation for bishops’ statements and the like.

Judith Neal directs the Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality (220 N. McLlroy Ave. #Business 301, Fayetteville, AR 72701; <http://waltoncollege.uark.edu>). It networks graduate students, convenes conversations and sponsors talks. Recent topics include “Why Good People Commit Fraud,” “Religious Diversity at Work,” and “The Spirituality of Executives.”

Former National Center for the Laity board member Rose Hart directs Appalachian Outreach (PO Box 233, Glen Dale, WV 26038; www.appalachianoutreaching.org). It solicits, gathers and distributes furniture, food and other necessities to the unemployed, using a network of churches and organizations. Cash donations are welcome.

Former National Center for the Laity president Greg Pierce moves his *Faith and Work* blog to www.mycatholicvoice.com/group/faith-and-work-in-cyberspace. Pierce is also moving his business, Acta (www.actapublications.com), back into the city proper. Not however in order to be a *little* closer to National

Center for the Laity headquarters but because the new location is within walking distance of Wrigley Field. Smile.

National Center for the Laity board member Bill McGarvey is web-editor for *Busted Halo* (Paulist Ministries, 405 W. 59th St., New York, NY 10019; www.bustedhalo.com). The site has film reviews, comments on relationships and careers, author interviews, a couple blogs on the sacred dimension of daily life and more. *Busted Halo* spills into You Tube and Sirius Radio.

McGarvey's own website (www.billmcgarvey.com) tracks his band, The Good Thieves. They perform on the Lower East Side and have a CD, *Beautiful Mess*.

National Center for the Laity's colleagues at Laity Lodge (PO Box 290670, Kerrville, TX 78029; www.thehighercalling.org) have a new website, *Our Daily Work*. It has a Scripture reflection for each workday plus interviews with workers. The Lodge fosters renewal of society through the renewal of lay leaders, particularly in their daily work.

The To Do List (<http://stevekokx.wordpress.com>) is a blog about culture and politics, specializing in Catholic social issues. Recent topics include Christianity and the environment and corporate social responsibility. The blog, which gets 400 hits per day, keeps a special eye on Michigan. Kokx is a graduate student of INITIATIVES' editor Bill Droel at Loyola University.

Alice Farrell (DePaul University Mission and Values, 1 E. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL 60604) wants INITIATIVES' readers to know about *Vincent de Paul: Charity's Saint*, a DVD in honor of the 350th anniversary of the death of St. Vincent and St. Louise de Marillac. These saints not only inspire religious orders, Catholic schools and agencies, the grass roots service of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, but also of countless Christians who act for good in their daily life.

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Contributing to this issue: John Ryan, member of St. Giles Family Mass Community (c/o Lisa Bascunan, 106 Franklin Ave., River Forest, IL 60305) & Lauren Sukal, who is involved with Western Pennsylvania Jobs With Justice (c/o JWJ, 1325 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20005; www.jwj.org).