

Initiatives

In Support of Christians in the World

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

April
2006

Number
155

Taking the Initiative

In the Parish

Lay people, writes Wally Kroeker, pick up “a sense that people who are truly committed [to God] go into *full-time Christian service*, while those who run a business or hold a job are second-class citizens.” The Church (capital C) so thoroughly neglects the world of work, he continues, that most people assume “*ministry* happens [only] within the bounds of the congregation [or parish]. Little attention is invested in the *church dispersed*.” (*The Marketplace* [12/05], 1821 Oregon Pike #201, Lancaster, PA 17601)

Vatican II, says Russell Shaw, “made it overwhelming clear” that a lay person’s responsibility “is primarily [an] apostolate that carries the gospel out into the world.” Yet since Vatican II, lay ministry inside the Church has received most of the emphasis. Internal “lay ministry is a good thing,” says Shaw, author of *Catholic Laity in the Mission of the Church* (Requiem Press [2005], PO Box 7, Bethune, SC 29009; \$14.95). But lay ministry within a Church organization is not the same thing as the Christian’s “right and duty to participate in the mission of the church,” on the job, around the home and in the neighborhood. (*Our Sunday Visitor* [1/8/06], 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750)

What could a parish or congregation do to support and challenge people for their vocation in the world? Kroeker has a few suggestions:

- The display case in the narthex could occasionally have photos of places where worshippers work or where retired parishioners formerly worked.
- The same display case could sometimes highlight the weekday services rendered by or tools used by parishioners. In churches with a liturgy, tools or other workplace artifacts could possibly be part of the Offertory Procession or the Dismissal Rite.

- A pastor could visit parishioners during their weekday lunch break to signal that work is important to the whole church.
 - The exit sign in the church could be changed to read “service entrance.”
- INITIATIVES welcomes other ideas, especially ones that have been tried.

Taking the Initiative

In the College Law School

The Institute on Religion, Law and Lawyers’ Work (Fordham University School of Law, 140 W. 62nd St., New York, NY 10023; auelmen@law.fordham.edu) is a hub for a movement among Catholic law schools to support lawyers trying to integrate their faith and their work and also to explore the place of religion in the public square. Since 2001 the Institute has hosted programs, influenced courses at Fordham and placed articles in law journals. Now other Catholic law schools are replicating it.

For example, Loyola Law School (919 Albany St., Los Angeles, CA 90015; www.lls.edu) recently invited Amy Uelmen from the Fordham Institute to address students, alumni and interested lawyers on “how to live integrated lives of faith.”

There are parallel ecumenical, Jewish and Muslim efforts. The Institute on Law, Religion and Ethics (24255 Pacific Coast Hwy., Malibu, CA 90263; <http://law.pepperdine.edu/ilre>), for example, fosters a wide-ranging dialogue on the lawyer’s vocation. A recent conference was titled “Lawyers, Faith and Peacemaking.” (*National Catholic Reporter* [10/28/05], PO Box 411009, Kansas City, MO 64179)

Taking the Initiative

In the College Cafeteria

“A growing number of colleges,” reports Lawrence Biemiller, are finding ways “to buy more of their food from local farmers and

manufacturers.” College food-service managers and chefs are cooperating with the trend—both those who work directly for the college and those who are contractors. Schools like Middlebury College (Middlebury, VT 05753) find that the effort pays off in the quality of their fruit, ice cream, milk and more. It’s also good for community relations and it appeals to a fair number of students who want to eat healthy and support the local economy.

Students and administrators need patience and flexibility to implement local buying. It isn’t enough to badger someone in the college kitchen, who is obligated by purchasing agreements. Those seeking more local purchasing must spend extra time writing contracts with food-service agencies and suppliers—many of whom are willing to cooperate if the contract is flexible enough to consider availability of products, liability insurance, size of loading docks and other details. The change has to be incremental. Sterling College (PO Box 72, Craftsbury Common, VT 05827), for example, specializes in environmental studies and agriculture. Thus, Sterling is disposed to buy local food. And yet because of students’ enormous appetites, the college must also use a big distributor.

Hays Atkins, food contractor at St. Olaf College (1520 St. Olaf Ave., Northfield, MN 55057), says that with a little research there are many opportunities to support the local economy. The local-buying effort, he notes, “is re-establishing the connection that at one point [many colleges] had to the land.”

Atkins is a manager for Bon Appetit Management Co. (100 Hamilton Ave. #300, Palo Alto, CA 94301), a major food-service contractor for colleges and other institutions. In all its promotional material Bon Appetit bills itself as “socially responsible” and is eager to honor local buying requests from its colleges. (*The Chronicle of Higher Education* [11/25/05], 1255 23rd St. NW #700, Washington, DC 20037)

Taking the Initiative

In the College Classroom

“Spirituality at Work” is an undergrad course at the University of San Francisco (2130 Fulton St., San Francisco, CA 94117) aimed at returning adults, who have jobs in health care, information technology or business. These young workers have a sense of ethics, says instructor Sarah Stockton. But their “spiritual identity and

practices” are associated with what happens “at home or in their churches, not in their offices.” The reading list for the course includes *Spirituality at Work* by Greg Pierce (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$13). Stockton is the author of *A Pen and a Path* (Morehouse Publishing [2005], 445 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10016; \$16.95). She delineates differences between “modeling one’s spiritual values and evangelizing in the workplace.” She also lifts up the notion of *calling*, applying it equally to careers in accounting, technical support, or nursing.

Viterbo University (900 Viterbo Dr., LaCrosse, WI 54601; www.viterbo.edu), drawing upon Franciscan ideals, wants its students to appreciate the *vocation* dimension of their careers. To that end, Viterbo offers a masters degree in servant leadership. Also, Thomas Thibodeau teaches a course at Viterbo titled “A Spirituality of Work.” *Full-Time Christians* by Bill Droel (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$7.50) is required reading. Thibodeau has another course in the education department, “Mission of Teaching.” *The Courage To Teach* by Parker Palmer (Jossey Bass [1997], 111 River St., Hoboken, NJ 07030; \$24.95) is one of the required books.

Are there other courses at other colleges that consider faith and work? Please alert INITIATIVES.

Taking the Initiative

With Politicians

Some months ago INITIATIVES suggested that prior to the 2008 electoral season U.S. Catholic bishops conduct dialogue sessions with Democratic and Republican leaders among their flock.

Archbishop Timothy Dolan (Chancery Office, PO Box 07912, Milwaukee, WI 53207) recently convened a daylong dialogue, hosted by Marquette University. A mayor, a Congressman, the lieutenant governor, two state senators, five state representatives and two county officials met with Dolan and several Church employees. Two of the politicians gave talks on how Catholicism influences their vocation. The day, reports Dolan, included “thorny questions” and plenty of “valuable” conversation.

Most Catholic politicians do not hide their faith, Dolan concluded. They “struggle to apply it.” The politicians he met, Dolan says, do

not dissent from “clear church teaching.” Instead, they try “to make wise, faithful, prudent decisions about applying it.” But, Dolan learned, they could use the help of ongoing faith formation. The politicians are open to “firm, clear and prophetic” teaching from the bishops, if forums can be devised. Dolan was “glad” he tried the dialogue and he hopes “there are more days like it.” (*Catholic Herald*, 10/27/05)

Taking the Initiative

Against the Wage & Wealth Gaps

The Securities and Exchange Commission (100 F St. NE, Washington, DC 20549; www.sec.gov) voted to require a dollar figure for each company’s total compensation of the CEO, four other top officers and all its directors. The figure must include stock options, retirement benefits, so-called parachutes, leases on a baseball skybox, private use of an airplane and more. After public hearings, the rule will likely take effect in 2007. The policy, admits Christopher Cox of the SEC, will not directly lower CEO pay. It will, however, give investors, unions and consumers better information for assessing a company.

We already know that executive pay “is out of control, socially corrosive and divorced from any real rationale,” says *N.Y. Times* columnist Joseph Nocera. The SEC policy is probably “laudable,” he continues, but don’t be surprised if some CEOs don’t raise their demands because they discover others are “getting something they don’t have.”

Instead of the indirect approach, Nocera (tsnocera@nytimes.com) wants to directly lower the “outsize salaries and bonuses,” “the obscene grants of stock options,” “the bloated retirement packages” and “the absurd perquisites” given CEOs, regardless of performance. He wants “your ideas” on how to “fix the executive pay problem.”

Nocera is aware of *It Takes A CEO* by Leo Hindery Jr. (Simon & Schuster [2005], 1230 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 10020; \$24), in which baseball’s policy of a *luxury tax* is applied to a company. Calculate the average annual pay for a company’s workers, says Hindery. Then choose a ratio like 25 to 1. If that company’s CEO is given more than 25times the average pay, the company is hit with a luxury tax. (To keep things honest, INITIATIVES proposes that the tax go to a charitable

organization chosen by the company’s closest competitor.)

Nocera also likes an idea from Nell Minow (Corporate Library, 45 Exchange St., Portland, ME 04101; www.thecorporatelibrary.com): Each year the CEO has to stand for an election by the shareholders. If 51% vote no, the CEO has to pull the string on the parachute. (*N.Y. Times*, 1/14 & 1/18/06 and *Wall St. Journal*, 1/17/06)

To be clear, Catholic doctrine does not require every worker to get paid the same or every family to have the same wealth. It does, however, require an economy in which all workers participate by bringing talents, labor, decision-making and more to the *common workbench*. When the wage gap and wealth gap are excessive, some workers do not have adequate access and the common good is not served.

United For A Fair Economy (29 Winter St. #200, Boston, MA 02108; www.faireconomy.org) is a thorough resource on the topic of wage and wealth disparity. An up to date analysis is found in *Inequality Matters* edited by Jim Lardner and David Smith (New Press [2006], 38 Greene St. #400, New York, NY 10013; \$25.95).

Taking the Initiative

Raising Wages

Raising workers’ pay could also narrow the wage and wealth gap. The Federal minimum wage has been \$5.15 since 1997.

Interestingly, reports John Broder, “nearly half of the civilian labor force lives in states where the [minimum] pay is higher than the rate set by the Federal government.” That’s because community groups and labor unions have successfully lobbied 17 states and many cities for minimums ranging between \$5.65 and \$7.40. (*N.Y. Times*, 1/2/06)

Jon Gertner reports that 134 successful local wage campaigns have occurred since the Industrial Areas Foundation (220 W. Kinzie St. #500, Chicago, IL 60610; www.industrialareasfoundation.org) organized one in the mid-1990s in Baltimore. (*N.Y. Times Magazine* (1/15/06)

The key to success, Gertner finds, is an emphasis on a *living wage* as a moral value. For example, a campaign in Santa Fe gained credibility with the support of Msgr. Jerome

Martinez y Alire (San Francisco Asis Cathedral (PO Box 2127, Santa Fe, NM 87504).

Martinez was asked if it was a difficult decision to support the wage ordinance. “I have gotten a lot of grief from some people, business owners, who say, ‘Father why don’t you stick to religion?’ Well, pardon me, this is religion.” A minimum wage increase to \$9.50 this year, which applies to Martinez’ 65 employees, “is a no-brainer.” “How,” he concludes, “can you worship a God that you do not see and then oppress the workers that you do see?”

The Acorn Living Wage Resource Center (88 Third Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11217; www.livingwagecampaign.org) is an expert on state and municipal wage ordinances. Interfaith Worker Justice (1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. #400, Chicago, IL 60660; www.iwj.org) also monitors this issue.

“For all the grass-roots success,” says Andrew Lustig, a raise in the Federal minimum raise is still “an important step toward improving the plight of the working poor.” (*Commonweal* [2/10/06], 475 Riverside Dr. #405, New York, NY 10115)

Right now the Fair Minimum Wage Act is stuck in Congress. Citizens can always, however, write their Congressional representatives. *Human Rights For Workers* (www.senser.com; 2/06) suggests a cyber-letter: (<http://capwiz.com/acorn/issues/alert/?alertid=7758011>).

Taking the Initiative

Among Artists

St. Malachy’s Church (239 W. 49th St., New York, NY 10019) has maintained the Actors’ Chapel for many years. Sunday night Mass attendance by actors and other theater people has nearly tripled in the last three years. Young people, says Fr. Richard Baker, seek meaning in their profession, solace in their disappointments and a community of belief. The Broadway experience, he reminds them, is at least partially rooted in the drama of the liturgy.

Christians in Theater Arts (PO Box 26471, Greenville, SC 29616; www.cita.org) is an independent support network for actors, writers, musicians and others. Regional chapters provide mutual support, ethical guidance and contacts with the wider community. (*N.Y. Times*, 12/23/05)

Taking the Initiative

In the Public Square

So-called *Christian right* groups and *liberal Christian social action* groups are rarely in dialogue with one another. The Christian right has, with exceptions, given up on incrementally advancing its concerns in a civic language. Instead, the Christian right seeks to impose its moral view on its own terms. The Christian left, including a few Catholic groups, occasionally does the same—pontificating, as it were, from the periphery of political institutions and cultural centers.

Former President Jimmy Carter consistently sustains a devout Christian faith and consciously brings his Baptist beliefs to bear in his professional career. Agree with him on the issues or not, Carter also persistently respects the rights and beliefs of others as he acts on his moral values. Carter discusses the public role of faith and religion in *Living Faith* (Crown Publishing [1998], 1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019; \$13) and most recently in *Our Endangered Values: America’s Moral Crisis* (Simon & Schuster [2005], 1230 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 10020; \$25).

Carter cautions some on the left regarding their rigidity and singular language on issues like abortion, so-called gay marriage and the separation of church and state. His overall concern, however, is the recent trend toward fundamentalism among religious and political leaders around the world. This movement has displaced political discourse with religious zealotry. Carter characterizes religious/political fundamentalism with three terms: rigidity, domination and exclusion.

In *Our Endangered Values* Carter addresses specific issues like science, women’s rights, foreign policy including preemptive war and the environment to illustrate the negative impact of fundamentalist concepts on public policy.

Carter wants the U.S. to maintain our national defense against conventional attacks and against terrorism. In addition, he wants the U.S. to exhibit other attributes of a true superpower: “These would include a demonstrable commitment to truth, justice, peace, freedom, humility, human rights, generosity, and the upholding of other moral values.” The U.S., he says, “should be the focal point around which other nations of all kinds could marshal to combat threats to security and to enhance the

quality of our common environment. We should be in the forefront of providing humane assistance to people in need, willing to lead other industrialized nations in sharing some of our great wealth with those who are destitute.”

Work and Art

It was 100 years ago that *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair (Bantam Classics [1906], 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036; \$5.95) horrified the nation. Sinclair’s story of a Lithuanian-American family in a neighborhood dominated by the meatpacking industry was an immediate best seller for Doubleday & Page Co., after four other publishers rejected the manuscript. Within months of its publication, the U.S. Congress passed the Pure Food and Drug Act by which President Theodore Roosevelt dispatched hundreds of inspectors to food processing plants.

Sinclair visited Chicago’s Union Stock Yards to research his novel. Over 12million animals per day were arriving there for slaughter and processing. The work was dirty and dangerous. The food was often contaminated. The neighborhood was overcrowded and unhealthy for children.

The novel, which is still *required reading* in many high schools, closes with a socialist shouting: “Organize! Organize! Organize! Chicago will be ours!” Indeed, the industry and neighborhood did change because--in addition to government intervention--workers organized. The Knights of Labor conducted the first organizing drive in the Chicago stockyards, exactly 20 years before Sinclair’s novel. In the early 1900s the Amalgamated Meat Cutters tried to improve conditions. Then, from about 1937-1943 the United Packinghouse Workers of the CIO organized in the Union Stock Yards. At the same time, Saul Alinsky—backed by Catholic parishes—organized the area’s residents into the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council. Drawing upon that experience, Alinsky started the Industrial Areas Foundation (220 W. Kinzie St. #500, Chicago, IL 60610; www.industrialareasfoundation.org), which is still organizing in working-class neighborhoods. The Packinghouse Workers merged with the Meat Cutters in 1968 and then both formed the United Food and Commercial Workers (1775 K St. NW, Washington, DC 20006; www.ufcw.org) in 1979.

The setting for Sinclair’s *The Jungle* has changed considerably over the years. In fact, the 475-acre Union Stock Yards closed in 1971. A massive limestone gate (850 W. Exchange Ave., Chicago, IL 60609; just west of Halsted St.) marks the area’s history.

On the other hand, immigrants are still arriving in the neighborhood; this time from Mexico. And what about the food processing industry? Any high school teacher who assigns *The Jungle* should direct students to *Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser (Harper Perennial [2005], 10 E. 53rd St., New York, NY 10022; \$14.95) to learn “what’s in the meat,” why food processing is “the most dangerous job” and more.

Work Prayers

Easy Essay on the Laity

“All Christians are called to *ministry of the laity*; not all, however, are invited to *lay ministry*.

Lay ministry is conferred by commission; ministry of the laity begins at baptism.

The field for the ministry of the laity is society; lay ministry, however, finds its place in the Church.

The locations for lay ministers are sacristy, sanctuary, vestibule; the areas for the ministry of the laity are job, family and neighborhood...

Lay ministers help proclaim God’s word; ministry of the laity shows how to live it. Lay ministers help distribute the Body of Christ; ministry of the laity helps us to become it.

Upon leaving the church [building], lay ministers start exercising the ministry of the laity.

You don’t have to be a doctor to be concerned about health or a lawyer to be concerned about the law. So too, you don’t have to be a lay minister to be involved in ministry of the laity.” –Msgr. Walter Niebrzydowski (Epiphany, 239 E. 21st St., New York, NY 10010), longtime friend of the National Center for the Laity

110+ Years

Of Catholic Social Thought

Unlike some famous encyclicals, Pope Benedict XVI’s first one is not about *the social*

question per se. *God Is Love (Deus Caritas Est)*, issued December 25, 2005, does not directly tackle international trade, migration, Third World poverty and the like. It is rather a readable meditation or even a homily on several aspects of love. On the other hand, nearly five of its 16 pages address Catholic social principles, particularly *subsidiarity, distributive justice and social charity*.

As to the Catholic virtue of *social justice*, Benedict XVI says the duty for ordering a just society “is proper to the lay faithful.” Lay people “are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity,” says *God Is Love*. “The mission of the lay faithful is...to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competencies and fulfilling their own responsibility.”

This worldly mission of lay Catholics differs from the task of the Church (upper case *C* in INITIAIVES terminology), Benedict XVI implies. “The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible...The formation of just structures is not directly the duty of the Church but belongs to the world of politics, the sphere of the autonomous use of reason” where lay people have competency.

Sometimes Church employees distinguish *charity* from *justice* in order to highlight the need to improve social policies. The distinction, the new encyclical says, can never imply that charity somehow perpetuates injustice by tempering a situation that workers or the poor would otherwise overthrow. Both virtues are necessary.

God Is Love points to the new *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$24), after listing the social encyclicals. *God Is Love* also notes that modern Catholic social tradition actually started before 1891, the date of Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum*. Specifically, Benedict XVI mentions the contribution of Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Kettler (1811-1877) of Germany. *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: the Popes Confront the Industrial Age* by Joe Holland (Paulist Press [2003], 997 Macarthur Blvd., Mahwah, NJ 07430; \$29.95) contains a thorough history of 19th century Catholic social writings, and more.

All those involved with Catholic Charities and with parish social ministries will particularly benefit from reading Benedict XVI’s

God Is Love. It can be downloaded in English from the Vatican website (www.vatican.va) or from Catholic Online (PO Box 9686, Bakersfield, CA 93389; www.catholic.org). A hard copy can be obtained for \$6.25 from Daughters of St. Paul (885 Providence Hwy., Dedham, MA 02026; www.pauline.org) or for \$5 from *Origins* (3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20017; 2/2/06).

Rest in Peace

Emery Biro, Jr. (1932-2006)

While a student at Central Catholic High School (2550 Cherry St., Toledo, OH 43608), Biro got heavily involved in Young Christian Students. That experience solidified his lifelong commitment to social justice. Biro was deputy director of the Peace Corps in Peru from 1961-1964. He then was the regional director of the Jobs Corps in Chicago. While in Chicago, Biro was involved with the Catholic Interracial Council and other civil rights groups, including the Chicago Human Relations Commission. His wife, Beth, was active in the League of Women Voters.

Biro moved to Annapolis in the early 1970s, where he served the U.S. Labor Department for more than 30 years. He was appointed to municipal commissions and was involved with church and civic groups.

Memorial donations can be sent to Peace Corps Partnership Program (1111 20th St. NW #800, Washington, DC 20526).

Rest in Peace

Lois Schumacher Marrone (1929-2005)

Similar to Biro, Marrone got the social justice bug as a high school student at Madonna High School; survived by Marmion Academy (1000 Butterfield Rd., Aurora, IL 60504). Marrone was a member of Chicago Inter-Scholastic Catholic Action Federation (CISCA). Fr. Martin Carrabine, SJ, the CISCA chaplain, recognized her talent and sent her to several workshops.

After graduating from high school, Marrone spent time at the Catholic Worker House in New York City.

Returning to Illinois, Marrone and some friends dreamed of a Catholic bookstore. They begged around for \$500 and in August 1948 opened St. Gregory’s Book Shop, modeled on St. Benet’s Bookshop in Chicago. At about the same

time Marrone became co-editor with Bob Reynolds of CISCA's *Today Magazine*, succeeding John Cogley and James O'Gara.

In the mid-1950s, Marrone and her husband Louis organized two sites for the new Catholic Adult Education Center Program, a forerunner of our National Center for the Laity. Russ Barta, founding president of NCL, was the

first director of CAEC. When Barta went to Mundelein College in 1960, Louis Marrone joined the staff of CAEC, where Lois was active in the film division.

A memorial for Marrone will be held June 25, 2006 in Aurora, IL. Contact NCL president Vaile Scott (vscott2103@aol.com) for details.

The National Center for the Laity exists:

- As a catalyst to keep alive the discussion of church-laity-world provoked by Vatican II and by the 1977 *Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern*.
- As a facilitator of a network of people and institutions that search for a spirituality that grows out of daily occupations and professions.
- As a ginger group to invigorate parishes, schools, agencies and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, encouraging them to sponsor conferences, retreats and support groups on the connection between work and the Christian life.
- As a center of information and opinion on the role of the Christian in the world; specifically by publishing our INITIATIVES newsletter and assisting others in writing and research on church and world.

National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629
 All orders must be pre-paid through U.S. mail.

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