

Initiatives

In Support of Christians in the World

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The Journey Outward

Here's an admonition from Pulitzer Prize author Annie Dillard: Young writers (and by extension, all young workers) must "dedicate (donate, give all) your life to something larger than yourself and pleasure—to the largest thing you can: To God, to relieving suffering, to contributing knowledge, to adding to literature, or something else. Happiness lies this way, and it beats pleasure hollow." (*In Fact: the Best of Creative Nonfiction* edited by Lee Gutkind, W.W. Norton [2004], 500 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10110; \$15.95)

Notice, says former National Center for the Laity president Greg Pierce, "Dillard doesn't use any *churchy* language (except *God*, who transcends the church). Dillard simply urges young adults to live big, to make a journey outward. Young adults need a mission worthy of their lives, something that will challenge them, invigorate their search for meaning." Pierce worries that young adults are not being called to change the world—or, they are not hearing the call. "Without a sense of mission, young people will never make long term commitments to the church, to civic life or even work," says Pierce.

Pierce will give several mission talks this year, anticipating themes from his soon-to-appear book, tentatively titled *The Sending Forth: A Spiritual Path for Catholics in the World of Work*. Find Pierce on January 17-18, 2007 at St. Maria Goretti (10 Maria Pl., Madison, WI 53711), on January 21, 2007 at Holy Family (2515 W. Palatine Rd., Inverness, IL 60067), on March 14, 2007 at St. Walter (130 W. Pine Ave., Roselle, IL 60172), on March 24, 2007 at a convocation for Diocese of Stockton (1105 N. Lincoln St., Stockton, CA 95203) and on August 6-7, 2007 at a retreat for the Cincinnati Religious Education Association (100 E. Eighth St., Cincinnati, OH 45202).

Pierce also facilitates a cyber-dialogue on the spirituality of work. Join him by sending your e-mail address to his secure site: ACTA Publications (5559 W. Howard St., Skokie, IL 60077; gpierce@actapublications.com).

Taking the Initiative

Among Business Leaders

"Business executives are often treated by their churches as either robber barons—with open hostility—or as rich benefactors—with undue deference," says Fr. Oliver Williams, CSC.

New books from religious publishers, including *Business, Religion and Spirituality* edited by Williams (University of Notre Dame Press [2003], Notre Dame, IN 46556; \$25), suggest language and an approach for a realistic interplay between faith and business.

The "long history of anti-business attitudes" among Church leaders impedes both pastors and executives, says R. Paul Stevens in *Doing God's Business: Meaning and Motivation for the Marketplace* (Eerdmans Publishing [2006], 2140 Oak Industrial Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505; \$14). To correct matters every theology student "should spend a semester in the workplace listening and learning...Every pastor should spend one day a week with members of her church in the workplace setting...Every church should open its pulpit, at least occasionally, to thoughtful business people to speak God's word from [an] integrative perspective."

Stevens has been a pastor, a carpenter, an owner of a construction business and a teacher at Regent College in Vancouver. Writing from an evangelical perspective, he explains that *salvation* is not only about one's soul in heaven but about "a totally renewed creation in a new heaven and a new earth." Salvation thus includes soul and body, and also businesses and even economic systems.

James Nolan is a founder of the Woodstock Business Conference (Georgetown University, PO Box 571137, Washington, DC 20057; <http://woodstock.georgetown.edu>), a national network of support groups for executives and professionals. In *Doing the Right Thing at Work: A Catholic's Guide to Faith, Business and Ethics* (St. Anthony Messenger [2006], 28 W. Liberty St., Cincinnati, OH 45202; \$12.95) he too asserts a positive interplay of

business, ethics and holiness. Many executives, Nolan says, sense a spiritual dimension to their work. They don't need moralizing from their pastors, but rather some relevant language and support.

Fr. William Byron, SJ, a former college president and now an MBA professor and a Catholic News Service columnist, draws upon many contacts with executives in *The Power of Principles: Ethics for the New Corporate Culture* (Orbis Books [2006], PO Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545; \$16) to show that business is, or can be, about justice, social responsibility, participation and holiness.

These books go beyond the notion of "being a nice person" at work. They all discuss an executive's responsibility to influence the company's culture. Nolan, for example, says that executives are "ministers of culture." And an excellent corporate culture, Nolan continues, is "not a laundry list of isolated rules," like Immanuel Kant on steroids. Micro-ethics must lead to concern and action about society and reflection on the meaning of work itself.

Taking the Initiative *On Lifestyle*

Exurbia "is the default setting for millions of [North] Americans," writes Anthony Flint in *This Land: the Battle Over Sprawl* (John Hopkins University Press [2006], 2715 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218; \$24.95). *Exurbia* is a place and a lifestyle that is "outside the outer fringe of any established suburb and a world apart from a central downtown or urban core." *Exurbia*, Flint details, is "terribly inefficient," contributing to the high cost of fuel, long commutes on congested highways, obesity from lack of exercise, the lack of affordable housing and more.

Flint, a journalist with the *Boston Globe*, names the complex factors in the tension between conventional land use policies and "a diverse group of people—planners, architects, environmentalists, affordable housing advocates, farmers, lawyers, public health doctors and those who are concerned about the poor—[who have] decided to do something about [sprawl]."

The umbrella term for the counter-movement is *smart growth*. Its hubs include Congress for the New Urbanism (140 S. Dearborn St. #310, Chicago, IL 60603; www.cnu.org), a monthly newsletter *New Urban News* (PO Box 6515, Ithaca, NY 14851;

www.newurbannews.com) and a website, www.newurbanism.org (824 King St. #103, Alexandria, VA 22314). These hubs share expertise on high-speed trains, solar power, civic art, water reclamation, zoning, mixed use housing and more.

Families move to exurbia, Flint writes, because they want "a safe, family-friendly, moderately-priced neighborhood... Everybody looks at new development as full of promise and free of problems. It's only after hundreds of other people make the same choice and move in a *boomburb* that the downside starts to manifest itself—the roadways knotted up with traffic and basic services like water and schools strained."

Flint mentions former National Center for the Laity board member Anthony Downs on the effect of building and widening roads to relieve traffic jams. In *Still Stuck In Traffic* (Brookings Institution [2004], 1775 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036; www.brook.edu; \$28.95) Downs documents that "when roadway capacity is increased, more cars are attracted and fill the additional lanes right back up again—a phenomenon known as *induced demand*."

The various policies and proposals about growth and development cut across traditional Democratic and Republican lines, Flint shows. Smart Growth and the New Urbanism face stiff resistance from home builders, retail chains and centers like American Dream Coalition (PO Box 1590, Bandon, OR 97411; www.americandreamcoalition.org) and Heartland Institute (19 S. LaSalle St. #903, Chicago, IL 60603; www.heartland.org), funded by oil companies—not to be confused with Heartland Center (6819 Indianapolis Blvd., Hammond, IN 46324), led by Fr. Thomas Gannon, SJ. These manufacturers, builders and others oppose smart growth from a short-term economic perspective. A revealing case study along these lines is the documentary *Who Killed the Electric Car?* (Sony Pictures [2006], www.sonyclassics.com; \$21.99).

More opposition takes ideological lines, including those who are anti-regional government and those who support a so-called *free market*. There are lots of code words on this front. For example, radio commentator Rush Limbaugh ridicules smart growth for *traffic calming* or *elitist planning*.

Flint admits that conflicting values are in play. "The central problem is that sprawl is good for individuals but bad for society," he concludes. The solution is to make plain that

sprawl is bad for individuals in the long run and that “alternatives to dispersal can satisfy all kinds of personal needs, wants and desires.”

Taking the Initiative

Worker-Owners

Five years ago the employees of Appleton Papers Inc. pooled their retirement savings and put \$107million down on purchase of the company, now called Appleton (PO Box 359, Appleton, WI 54912; www.appletonideas.com). Today, the 3,200 worker-owners draw a regular paycheck and a share of the profit on \$1.1billion in annual sales of specialty paper products. Indeed, reports Joel Dresang, 22 of the original worker-owners have become millionaires. Appleton is stable enough to spend \$60million per year on acquisitions. Employee-ownership has “positioned Appleton to diversify its business into more promising new technologies and fostered greater teamwork.”

Meanwhile, about 60 miles to the south, the employees of Apache Stainless Equipment (200 W. Industrial Dr., Beaver Dam, WI 53916; www.apachestainless.com) wanted to buy their company, a \$45million annual sales manufacturer of food processing equipment and specialty vats. The debt portion of their offer, however, was too risky. And so, Dexter Company (211 W. Grimes Ave., Fairfield, IA 52556; www.dexter.com) entered the picture. Dexter, a manufacturer of commercial washers and dryers, has been employee-owned for nearly 20 years. Dexter acquired Apache, adding more worker-owners to its group.

Several employee-owned companies are now sufficiently experienced that they are making acquisitions, says Corey Rosen of the National Center for Employee Ownership (1736 Franklin St. #800, Oakland, CA 94612; www.nceo.org).

Employee-ownership is not a panacea, says Mickey Thompson of the United Steelworkers (1244 Midway Rd., Menasha, WI 54952), the union at Appleton—yes, several employee-owned companies have unions. First, “you’re elated.” Then there’s a realization that “you’re expectations aren’t realistic.” Then maybe anger. Now after five years at Appleton, “we’re changing the way we do things. [We] do it better because we’re the ones in the end who are going to make the money.” (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 10/15/06 & 11/5/06)

INITIATIVES has followed the worker-owner story for many years. Successful companies usually have assistance from the former owner. Buyouts of failing companies are extremely difficult. The term *coop* is used for smaller, start-up businesses. They too can be successful. The U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives (PO Box 170701, San Francisco, CA 94117; www.usworker.coop) is one of several resources.

Taking the Initiative

As Consumers

The Mennonite Central Committee (PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501; www.mcc.org) launched the fair trade movement in 1946 by importing and then selling handicrafts at above market prices. Fair trade has grown since then, particularly in the past few years.

Its original purpose was to provide a reasonable income to Third World craftspeople and farmers; asking U.S. consumers to, in a sense, make a donation. It was soon appropriate to require the suppliers to uphold positive labor and environmental practices. In many cases it is now possible to give suppliers technical assistance, loans and more. Some movement leaders are leveraging the relationship with fair trade suppliers for democracy in villages or wider areas. Some are leveraging the popularity of fair trade products, especially coffee, to influence large companies like McDonalds.

Fair Trade Resource Network (PO Box 33772, Washington, DC 20033; www.fairtraderesource.org) and Equal Exchange (50 United Dr., West Bridgewater, MA 02379; www.equalexchange.com), the largest for-profit fair trade company in the U.S., are skeptical of distributing fair trade products through large companies, fearing that the goal of improved labor practices overseas will be neglected.

Likewise, the highly-regarded National Labor Committee (540 W. 48th St. #300, New York, NY 10036; www.nlcnet.org) is uncomfortable with expanding fair trade to include clothing. NLC wants the addresses of the apparel factories and wants thorough inspections. Fair Indigo (2140 W. Greenview Dr. #7, Middleton, WI 53562; www.fairindigo.com) says it can sell affordable apparel only if it keeps its fair trade information in-house.

Although there’s no copyright on the term *fair trade*, only Trans Fair USA (1611 Telegraph Ave. #900, Oakland, CA 94612;

www.transfairusa.org) can certify a product with the official logo, a yin yang character carrying two bowls. Trans Fair is about two years away from dealing with apparel. For now, coffee and chocolate are the most popular products. (*Utne Reader* [12/06], 1503 SW 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609 and *Chicago Tribune*, 11/5/06)

Catholic Relief Services (209 W. Fayette St., Baltimore, MD 21201; www.crsfairtrade.org) is one distributor of fair trade coffee and other products. A parish committee could, perhaps once a month, sell CRS coffee and chocolate after Mass.

Taking the Initiative

In Labor Relations

The Labor Guild (85 Commercial St., Weymouth, MA 02188) recently held its unique Cushing-Gavin Awards Dinner for the 40th time. Not only do executives and labor leaders attend, says Fr. Ed Boyle, SJ, but also “a broad array of support professionals, including attorneys, mediators, arbitrators, regulatory staff, consultants in health care, pensions and more.” The Guild, Boyle continues, knows that labor negotiations often spill into “emotional and angry exchanges. Conversation at a pleasant awards dinner can build personal relationships that will serve in good stead in times of difficult contract negotiations.”

Both negotiating parties need to remember, Boyle observes, that the other can be constrained by “inflexible or unrealistic expectations” in the front office, among the employees and elsewhere. The Guild helps all concerned to reflect on “the interconnectedness of our work.”

For a donation to The Labor Guild, you will receive its informative newsletter, *Labor Life*. Donors need not be full-time labor relations professionals nor be residents of Boston.

Taking the Initiative

In the Hotel

“When I check into a hotel,” says reporter Jason Byassee, “I don’t usually think about its workers.” But “something interesting happened” to Byassee during a recent assignment covering an ecumenical campaign in support of a new contract for workers represented by Unite Here Local One (55 W. Van Buren St. #420, Chicago, IL 60605; www.unitehere.org).

Byassee learned that the hotel/motel business, off somewhat for five years, is returning to record profit. Because labor is about half of a hotel’s budget, owners are tempted to cut pay and benefits. At the same time, hotels compete by offering more amenities which, in turn, often means more tasks in shorter time for maids. The fast pace in the hospitality business was the motive behind successful lobbying by Unite Here for an Illinois law requiring two paid 15-minute breaks and a 30-minute unpaid lunch break for hotel workers.

While on this assignment, Byassee also discovered Informed Meeting Exchange (1775 K St. NW #620, Washington, DC 20006; www.inmex.org), a union-supported service that tracks labor relations at convention sites. Church groups, professional associations and others planning a meeting now use Inmex to assure against embarrassing situations regarding picket lines and more. A similar service for individuals is soon to arrive in cyberspace. (*Christian Century* [11/14/06], 104 S. Michigan Ave. #700, Chicago, IL 60603)

Taking the Initiative

In the Restaurant

The Federal minimum wage for “food and beverage servers” is \$2.13. Those workers, of course, rely on tips to make a living. In fact, a waitress pays income tax not only on the hourly wage, but also on 12.5% of all sales in her section of the restaurant during the shift. If a tip only hovers around 12%, a waiter pays taxes on income he didn’t receive. Keep in mind too that at the end of a shift waitresses customarily give about 4% of their tips (sometimes more) to the busboys and dish washers.

All of this is to say that the traditional 15% tip is no longer adequate, except perhaps in the busiest restaurants. Fair Tip (www.fairtip.org), a cyber-organization, campaigns for an industry-wide 20% service charge on each restaurant bill. In the meantime, Fair Tip hopes customers will voluntarily bump up to 20%. In no case should a customer express displeasure by tipping small. Better to complain to the manager and/or the cook.

To read about restaurant workers, get *Hey, Waitress: the USA from the Other Side of the Tray* by Alison Owings (University of California Press [2002], 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94704; \$16.95).

North American Spirituality

Dorothy Day (1897-1980)

Day's autobiography, *The Long Loneliness* (Harper Collins [1952], 10 E. 53rd St., New York, NY 10022; \$16), is well known to admirers of the co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement. Now, her earlier account of her life is back in print: *From Union Square To Rome* (Orbis Books [1938], PO Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545; \$15).

From Union Square takes the form of a long letter to Communists, explaining why its author left their company for Catholicism. The book, however, is not an attack upon Day's "circle of socialists, anarchists, literary bohemians, and assorted rebels," says editor Robert Ellsberg. In fact, Day asserts, it was "smug Christians" in their neglect of the poor "who made me turn to Communism." Further, it was the compassion of many communists who disposed Day to "turn to God." She is sympathetic, recognizing that idealists were attracted to Communism because it is difficult, while Christianity is too much "the accepted thing."

Day mentions many of her favorites like St. Teresa of Avila and Fyodor Dostoevsky in *From Union Square*. She also displays her down-to-earth yet literate and inspiring writing style, which over the years influenced scores of Catholic journalists.

Meanwhile, St. John's University School of Law (8000 Utopia Pky., Jamaica, NY 11439) has endowed a Dorothy Day Professor of Law chair, appointing David Gregory to it.

Gregory is an expert on labor law and several Catholic topics, including Blessed Frederick Ozanam and the St. Vincent de Paul Society and, of course, Day and the Catholic Worker movement. In fact, Gregory wrote a 43-page biography of Day for *The Teachings of Modern Christianity on Law, Politics and Human Nature* edited by John Witte (Columbia University Press [2006], 61 W. 62nd St., New York, NY 10023; \$75 for each of two volumes).

Gregory recommends that college groups consider hosting *Haunted By God*, a play about Day through Still Point Theater (4625 N. Paulina St., Chicago, IL 60640).

North American Spirituality

Msgr. Reynold Hillenbrand (1905-1979)

The Liturgical Institute (1000 E. Maple Ave., Mundelein, IL 60060; www.liturgicalinstitute.org) has a display—both in physical space and in cyberspace—of pictures, news clippings, audiotapes and text about Hillenbrand, "a visionary leader of liturgical reform and social renewal."

Hillenbrand was influenced by the liturgy and social outreach in his German-American boyhood parish of St. Michael's (1633 N. Cleveland Ave., Chicago, IL 60614) and later by the writings of St. Pius X (1835-1914), by the 1920s Liturgical Movement in European monasteries, by articles from Fr. Virgil Michel, OSB (1890-1938) of Minnesota, by the social encyclicals, by the Young Christian Workers in Belgium and elsewhere, and by Hillenbrand's own students and disciples, including National Center for the Laity founders Russ Barta, Msgr. Dan Cantwell and Ed Marciniak as well as Patrick and Patty Crowley, Msgr. Jack Egan, Msgr. George Higgins and others. Hillenbrand was an innovative rector of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary from 1936-1944 and a founder of several influential organizations including the Liturgical Conference and the Christian Family Movement. He anticipated by 30 years the theology and liturgical practices of Vatican II (1962-1965) and—with his associates—helped the U.S. Catholic church to receive and implement the Council.

Hillenbrand, the Liturgical Institute exhibit notes, spoke constantly about the Mystical Body of Christ. This doctrine, he taught, was central to the liturgy and to social reform, tying the two together. The Mystical Body of Christ was popular with young adult Catholics in the 1940s. Today it is rarely mentioned in homilies and elsewhere. Is there a reason why it was dropped? Would its recovery be helpful to young adult Catholics? Please inform INITIATIVES!

Rest in Peace

Joseph P. Sullivan (1933-2006)

Sullivan was a business leader who used leveraged buyouts to save 14 agricultural companies. Along the way, Sullivan—with his wife Jeanne—assisted many organizations, notably the American Refugee Committee (430 Oak Grove St. #204, Minneapolis, MN 55403;

www.archq.org), which trains health care providers in Darfur, Uganda, Thailand and elsewhere. Sullivan also campaigned against trafficking and corruption in Latin America through the International Human Rights Law Institute (DePaul University, 25 E. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL 60604; www.law.depaul.edu).

He earned an undergraduate and a business degree at Harvard University. He moved to Chicago as an executive for Swift & Co. He did well enough to retire at age 50. But within a few months he was back, attracted by, in his words, “the fun of doing deals.” His new firm, Vigoro, went public after seven years and was eventually bought by IMC Global.

How could Sullivan and his colleagues make money and save jobs by taking over a failing company? Because he managed them with great competence, using principles derived from his reflection on Catholic action, including the struggles of his immigrant grandparents and others.

Sullivan revealed his business secrets at a 1986 conference of our National Center for the Laity. Catholicism is premised on the innate dignity of each person, Sullivan began. But lots of Catholics and others talk paternally, as if they can bestow dignity through kind gestures, words of encouragement or even, for example, “employee of the month” contests. By contrast, Sullivan knew that his companies “do not invest people with human dignity. They have it before, during and after employment with us. As managers, what we can do is provide an environment that enhances that dignity.”

Taking cues from the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, Sullivan tried to “delegate authority and responsibility as much as possible” in his companies. He cut layers of management, grouped workers into teams, shared information,

invested in employee training and encouraged involvement in local communities.

Some companies don’t succeed, Sullivan concluded, because its investors and managers think too narrowly about the purpose of business. During a slump, those companies instinctually layoff workers and curtail growth. If, by contrast, the purpose of business is to create employment and serve the common good, then growth and improved services are constants. “Most firms in the U.S.,” Sullivan told NCL participants, “can grow at a measured pace if they are creative and dedicated to the concept of the common good.”

Sullivan thought of “business as a vocation.” Yet, with a few exceptions like the NCL, Sullivan never “heard business described as a vocation” by Catholic leaders. So too some Catholic publications address business issues. But, with the exception of INITIATIVES and a few others, they “display a meager understanding of the dynamics of business” and instead focus on “structural issues of capitalism vs. socialism.” Sullivan urged Church professionals “to make a special effort” to understand business environments in order to help owners and managers find meaning in their chosen vocation.

Sullivan served on our NCL board in the early 1980s. In 1987 he was part of a small NCL group that, in cooperation with some U.S. Catholic bishops, launched Business Executives for Economic Justice (5559 W. Howard St., Skokie, IL 60077; spiritualitywork@aol.com). Apart from his formal involvement with NCL, Sullivan was a counselor to your INITIATIVES’ editor and to former NCL president Greg Pierce. Over breakfast, Sullivan regularly gave us sound advice for dealing with business leaders and Church officials—and, importantly, for making trades in our rotisserie league. Smile.

co-sponsor of the conference, wants a good showing of Catholics at the April gathering.

“Business As Ministry” is a July 16-27, 2007 seminar at Calvin College (3201 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; www.edu/scs).

“Spirituality in the Workplace” is a March 9-11, 2007 course at The Isle of Wight College (Medina Way, Newport, PO30 5TA Isle of Wight; www.iwcollege.ac.uk). The teacher is Fr. Dermot Tredget, OSB of Douai Abbey, a longtime friend of our National Center for the Laity.

Happenings

David O’Brien, a historian of U.S. Catholicism and a longtime friend of our National Center for the Laity, is retiring. “Shaping American Catholicism,” a conference in O’Brien’s honor, will be held April 13-14, 2007 at College of the Holy Cross (1 College St., Worcester, MA 01610; www.holycross.edu/departments/crec).

The Coalition for Ministry in Daily Life (2015 NE Loop 410, San Antonio, TX 78217; www.dailylifeministry.org) holds its annual conference April 13-15, 2007 in Cleveland. Our National Center for the Laity, a CMDL partner and a