

Initiatives

In Support of Christians in the World

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

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Taking the Initiative

Within Business

Let's first acknowledge that everyone does nearly everything out of mixed motives. Now for a report:

Lloyd Blankfein, CEO of Goldman Sachs (85 Broad St., New York, NY 10004) and six other executives at the firm asked their board to give them no bonuses for 2008. Their base salary is \$600,000. Four would have received a minimal bonus of \$10million each; three would have gotten about \$67million each. Goldman Sachs is "part of an industry that is directly associated with the ongoing economic distress," says a spokesperson. Relinquishing the bonuses "is the right thing to do." (*Wall St. Journal*, 11/17/08)

INITIATIVES once hoped that President Ronald Reagan's era of deregulation would prompt business leaders to voluntarily agree upon collaborations, best practices and restraints aimed at the common good—without engaging in any collusion. A few business associations in real estate, waste management, food processing and printing did indeed facilitate pro-environmental changes. But many more businesses used deregulation to ignore their own internal oversight and their social responsibility. Despite obvious betrayal of public trust many businesses continue to decry government interference.

The ideal of equality in the U.S. does not mean economic equality; workers receive different wages and benefits based on company policy. However, too wide a gap between a company's top wages and its lowest is not good for the business and, when it occurs in multiple companies, the gap erodes the premise of our beautiful country. (See *Unequal Democracy: the Political Economy in the New Gilded Age* by Larry Bartels, Russell Sage Foundation [2008], 112 E. 64th St., New York, NY 10021; \$29.95)

Blankfein and his colleagues are making a gesture. It won't in itself abolish greed. Yet, as Catholicism well knows, reform often comes about as gestures and symbols capture

public imagination. Will others follow Blankfein's example?

Several college presidents are giving back part of their salaries. For example, Mark Wrighton (Washington University, 1 Brookings Dr., St. Louis, MO 63130) asked his board to cut his pay by 5% as of January 1, 2009 and by another 5% on July 1, 2009. "We are in very difficult financial times," he says. This gesture lets "the community know that I'm sensitive to the situation." President Elson Floyd (Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164) asked for a \$100,000 pay cut; others have refused raises and/or made significant donations to their schools. (*N.Y. Times*, 11/23/08)

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Among Doctors

Edgar Gamboa, a trauma director and a chief of surgery in California, thinks that our dollar-driven medical system breeds distrust. "The sacred trust between physician and patient" is severely severed. In *Virtuous Healers* (St. Anthony Messenger Press [2008], 28 W. Liberty St., Cincinnati, OH 45202; \$15.95) he explores "the traditional ideals and enduring virtues of the work, the mission, the apostolate [of] medicine."

Virtuous Healers is not a public policy treatise; it is a prayer book, complete with reflection questions, short prayers (like "My Prayer before Making Rounds") and spiritual exercises. This book is something like *Spirituality at Work: 10 Ways To Balance Life On the Job* by Greg Pierce (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$12) in that through 14 chapters Gamboa names about 30 virtues to be accented by a health care provider. Gamboa then employs 26 Christians to illustrate the virtues. His exemplars are mostly saints or people in the saint-making pipeline; people like Pope John XXIII, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Luke and more. Each of Gamboa's "models of faith in medicine" receives a four-page biography. On first glance the biographies do not relate to big issues like health care insurance or to smaller concerns like understaffing at, let's say, a pulmonary clinic. On first glance *Virtuous Healers* could have been two pamphlets. But

surrounded by Gamboa's introductions and his questions, the biographies indeed relate to the intended audience. And—maybe at third glance—his engaging meditation relates to any young worker.

In a chapter titled "Coffee Break" Gamboa demonstrates his technique. He considers a question that our NCL has been pondering for 31 years: Does "a good and effective physician [or any worker] necessarily have to be spiritual" and in what way does a religious person display spirituality on the job? The Sunday night surgery was for a shooting victim who will be paralyzed. Both Gamboa and his intern work excellently in the operating room. Thereafter, over coffee, the intern says he is an atheist and prone to despair when he thinks about "tough situations." He suspects that faith gives Gamboa, what the intern calls, a psychological edge. Gamboa does not moralize. He offers the intern a quotation about ordinary miracles. "We finished our coffee in silence," he writes. The chapter continues with two biographies highlighting the interplay of faith and doubt.

Other recent reflections by and/or about doctors include *Intern: A Doctor's Initiation* by Sandeep Jauhar (Farrar, Straus [2009], 175 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010; \$15) and *Treatment Kind and Fair* by Perri Klass (Basic Books [2008], 1094 Flex Dr., Jackson, TN 38301; \$24.95) and *The Surgeons: Life and Death in a Top Heart Center* by Charles Morris (W.W. Norton [2007], 500 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10110; \$24.95) and *How Doctors Think* by Jerome Groopman (Houghton Mifflin [2007], 222 Berkeley St., Boston, MA 02116; \$26).

We Will Be Healed: Spiritual Renewal for Healthcare Professionals by Susan Bliss (Acta Publications [2007], 5559 W. Howard St., Skokie, IL 60077; \$9.95) is written by a pharmacist and applies to all types of workers. Finally, there are a limited number of copies of *Spirituality of Work: Nurses* by Bill Droel (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$2).

Taking the Initiative

In the Liturgy

The National Center for the Laity believes in an essential connection between weekend liturgy and weekday work. Unfortunately, Catholics often celebrate Mass in isolation from daily life. An improved dismissal rite, the NCL suggests,

might aid in propelling Catholics into the world and in drawing the world back to the offertory table. "If we get the dismissal rite right," says former NCL president Greg Pierce, "we get everything right."

Pope Benedict XVI also desires a stronger dismissal rite aimed at the church's missionary spirit. He chose three new end-of-Mass sentences that in his opinion make a more explicit connection to the world. Cast your vote for:

- A. "Go and announce the gospel of the Lord."
- B. "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life."
- C. "Go in peace."

These phrases are now part of the official *Roman Missal*, along with the familiar "The Mass is ended; go in peace."

Benedict XVI also wants to move the sign of peace to another part of Mass. Should it become part of the dismissal rite? (*Today's Catholic*, 10/26/08)

By the way, Pierce's book on the dismissal rite, *The Mass Is Never Ended* (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$10), has two endorsements on its jacket from an unlikely pair: the renowned Benedict XVI and your pedestrian newsletter editor. Smile.

Taking the Initiative

For Green Jobs

Greg Pierce, former president of our National Center for the Laity, is always up on the latest. And once you catch up with the latest, like with Pierce's campaign on the dismissal rite, he's onto the next latest. Smile.

"Even if you disagree with his politics," commands Pierce from the soapbox, "you must read *Hot, Flat and Crowded* by Thomas Friedman (Farrar, Straus [2008], 18 W. 18th St., New York, NY 10011; \$27.95)."

The U.S. will have positive influence around the world and prosperity at home only when its citizens, businesses and other institutions go green in their responsible and creative use of natural resources, Friedman argues. A green emphasis can create stable jobs, not only for technicians and engineers, but also for blue collar workers. It will take effort, however, to advance the cause.

Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota (c/o Sierra Club, 2327 E. Franklin Ave. #1, Minneapolis, MN 55406;

www.northstar.sierraclub.org), part of a national network, recently staged a rally in support of green collar jobs. Some state legislators are in tune with EJA, others need more education. So too with unions. Some think the green movement will take away more jobs than it creates. (*Union Advocate* [10/3/08], 411 Main St. #202, St. Paul, MN 55102)

Not so, says David Roland-Holst (Center for Energy Resources and Economic Sustainability, University of California, Mulford Hall #MC1250, Berkeley, CA 94720; dwrh@are.berkeley.edu). In a thorough review of California energy policies on coal, auto emissions, appliance and building standards and more he counted 1.5million new jobs over 30 years. In the same period less than 25,000 layoffs are the result of cleaner energy mandates.

In a subsequent edition INITIATIVES will report on pioneering community organizations involved with job creation in energy preservation.

By the way, Friedman, is profiled in *The New Yorker* (4 Times Sq., New York, NY 10036; 11/10/08).

Taking the Initiative *For Lawyers*

The Reflective Counselor: Daily Meditations for Lawyers by F. Gregory Coffey & Maureen Kessler (American Bar Association [2008], 321 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60654; www.abanet.org; \$29.95) has 365 quotations followed by short commentary.

The Spirituality of Work: Lawyers by Bill Droel (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, 60629; \$1.25) is a meditation on a lawyer's vocation.

Taking the Initiative *Assisting the Unemployed*

St. Andrew's Career Mentoring Ministry (1400 Inglewood, Rochester, MI 48307), now in its second year, offers mutual support, prayer, resume and interviewing reviews and contacts for the recently unemployed. The ministry cooperates with 13 churches to get referrals and leads.

St. Basil Job Search Support Group (8700 Brecksville St., Brecksville, OH 44141) is a similar effort. Its leaders, as in several other unemployed support groups, are recently retired workers. (*The Evangelist*, 11/20/08)

St. Hubert Job and Networking Ministry (729 Grand Canyon St., Hoffman Estates, IL 60169) has been at it for several years. It recently co-hosted a job search session for veterans. (*Catholic New World*, 11/8/08)

St. Patrick Employment Support Ministry (10815 N. 84th St., Scottsdale, AZ 85260) has met every other week for five years. Each new participant gets a chance to verbally present his or her resume. Others then critique the presentation and soon mutual support and specific leads surface. (*Catholic Sun*, 5/15/08)

St. Joseph Parish (715 N. Lapeer Rd., Lake Orion, MI 48362; www.stjosephlakeorion.org) posts links to audiotapes about job hunting. One link, delivered by the pastor, is titled "The Spiritual Challenges of Being Unemployed." Another on a manager's role in firing employees is in production.

Our National Center for the Laity distributes two booklets (both in very limited supply): *The Spirituality of Work: Unemployed Workers* by Joe Gosse (1943-2000) and *On the Firing Line: Managers' Perspective on Terminations and Layoffs in Light of Catholic Teaching*.

INITIATIVES seeks reports from more self-help unemployment groups, including from Rhode Island, the state with the highest unemployment rate.

A subsequent report in INITIATIVES will explain the mushrooming of "workers' centers," which in addition to counseling individual workers also advocate for public and business policies that mitigate unemployment. A list of 20 such centers is found on the back of each issue of *Faith Works* (Interfaith Worker Justice, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. #400, Chicago, IL 60660; www.iwj.org).

Work Prayers *Grace Before Meals*

A family or a circle of colleagues goes to a restaurant. A parish group hosts a function. A wedding party celebrates in a banquet hall. Someone offers a blessing, giving thanks for the cook in the kitchen and the servers at the table. However, writes Leah Reddy, gratitude should extend much further, for many more people are involved.

Reddy starts simply with the cup containing her first coffee of the day. Many street vendors and coffee shops no longer use styrofoam. Instead, the cup begins with trees.

Georgia Pacific (133 Peachtree St. NE, Atlanta, GA 30303), using a massive machine, makes pulp and then rolls of thick paper. At another plant the paper is coated in wax. Dopaco Inc. (Woodbine & Lincoln Rds., Dowingtown, PA 19355) buys the paper and in ten production steps forms cups. Then, in Reddy's case, Encompass Media Group (28 E. 28th St., New York, NY 10016) brokers the advertising on the cup—maybe promoting a chain of coffee shops or any kind of ad at all. Encompass deals with distributors who then supply the vendor. Reddy's cup, for example, came by way of a man in Westchester County who early each morning supplies corner stands in Lower Manhattan.

So include all those people in grace before meals, says Reddy. (*Trinity News* [Fall/08], 74 Trinity Pl., New York, NY 10006)

And quickly now—before the coffee gets cold—pray for the coffee growers, harvesters, shippers, plumbers and more. By the way, INITIATIVES trusts that Reddy and our other readers are sipping Fair Trade coffee. If not, contact Catholic Relief Services (228 W. Lexington St., Baltimore, MD 21201; www.crsfairtrade.org).

North American Spirituality

Rowman & Littlefield (4501 Forbes Blvd. #200, Lanham, MD 20706; \$27.95) has reissued *Catholics In America* by Patrick Carey. Eleven chapters cover U.S. Catholicism from 1492-2007; the big events are summarized in a five-page appendix. Of particular interest to this regular column in INITIATIVES is a 60-page sketch of 59 prominent Catholics, from Cardinal Joseph Bernardin (1928-1996), archbishop of Chicago to Fr. John A. Zahm, CSC (1851-1921), a science professor at the University of Notre Dame. Several lay people are among the entries, including Michael Williams (1877-1950), a founder of *Commonweal* magazine; Daniel Rudd (1854-1933), a journalist and president of Afro-American Lay Catholic Congress; Dorothy Day (1897-1980), a founder of the Catholic Worker movement; and more.

To write its regular profiles of North American Catholics, INITIATIVES draws upon another excellent book by Carey, *American Catholic Religious Thought* (Marquette University Press [2004], PO Box 3141, Milwaukee, WI 53201; \$37). It features eight episodes in our history and details the careers of 13 influential people.

The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America by James O'Toole (Harvard University Press [2008], 79 Garden St., Cambridge, MA 02138; \$27.95) refreshingly tells the story from the vantage of the laity. The approach is evident on the book's cover: the inside of a 1950s V-8 car with a magnetic statue on the dash.

Rodger Van Allen uses both Carey and O'Toole to charge that “champions of the status quo seem to lack accurate historical perspective” on the lay trustee experiment. In the early 1800s lay boards in this country held title to parishes in about 230 situations. There were a few well-publicized disputes between a lay board and a bishop, usually over assigning a specific priest. “The real story,” says Van Allen, is the success of 97% of the experiments. Nonetheless bishops today regularly invoke the troublesome examples “to thwart initiatives for broader lay participation.”

No one, certainly not our National Center for the Laity, wants a return to lay trusteeism. But as we seek “a church of accountability and responsibility,” concludes Van Allen, it would help to study positive experiments of lay involvement. (*Commonweal* [9/12/08], 475 Riverside Dr. #405, New York, NY 10115)

News and Views

Through the 2008 election campaign (which began in 2004, it seems) INITIATIVES collected several so-called *Catholic voter guides*. *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* by the U.S. Catholic bishops (USCCB, 3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20017; www.usccb.org) was thought provoking. About eight bishops each published an additional guide and a state bishops' conference or two also weighed in.

Several so-called Catholic lobby groups published their comparison between candidates' positions and what the groups called “Catholic social teaching.” So too did some diocesan newspapers and some fraternal organizations. Each group, however, was selective in highlighting the issues.

All the guides advised people to vote with conscience. And all advised voting for the individual candidate in each contest who best matches the moral position on the issues.

But what about *voting the ticket*, as we say in Chicago? After all, the genius of Catholicism is its insistence that individuals do not broker politics one-by-one. Catholic social

theory is unique and much needed because it champions the mediating structures that can buffer families from the harshness of the world.

Why now are the bishops and other Catholic leaders telling people *to vote the candidate*? Why further weaken the precinct at the very time other mediating institutions are losing their effectiveness, including many parish groups, unions, civic associations, parent-teacher associations and more? Isn't it, in general, more moral to vote the ticket than pick-and-choose candidates?

Instead of encouraging cafeteria voters, could the bishops and other Catholic leaders acknowledge those Republicans and Democrats who go inside their respective party and reform it—by, for example, going to Republican caucuses and agitating for firm action instead of empty rhetoric on pro-life, anti-poverty and more; by, for example, devising policies for Democratic officer holders that combat poverty without government bureaucracy or by raising money for pro-life Democrats? (See Democrats for Life, 601 Pennsylvania Ave. NW #900S, Washington, DC 20004; www.democratsforlife.org)

Rest in Peace

Louis Studs Terkel (1912-2008)

All of Terkel's books, particularly those based on his interviews, remain remarkable meditations on the meaning of work in the U.S. Admittedly, there are discouraged and disgruntled voices. "Jobs are not big enough for people," says medical editor Nora Watson in *Working* (New Press [1972], 450 W. 41st St., New York, NY 10036; \$13). "It is not just the assembly line worker whose job is too small for his spirit, you know. A job like mine, if you really put your spirit into it, you would sabotage

immediately. You don't dare. So you absent your spirit from it."

Yet many of Terkel's people suspect life might have more inherent meaning than they are experiencing. "My attitude is that I don't get excited about my job," says steelworker Mike Lefevre in the opening vignette of *Working*. Ideally, "I would like to see a building [with] a foot-wide strip from top to bottom with the name of every bricklayer, every electrician, with all the names. So when a guy walked by, he could take his son and say *See that's me over there on the forty-fifth floor. I put the steel bean in.* [An artist] can point to a painting... A writer can point to a book. Everybody should have something to point to." (Memo to Lefevre: There is a famous building in Manhattan that lists all its builders. Do INITIATIVES' readers know the building?)

There are many voices in Terkel's books who find meaning by being competent and by letting their personalities shape the job. "I have to be a waitress," says Dolores Dante in *Working*. "Maybe with coffee I give them a little philosophy. I don't feel lowly at all. I myself feel sure. I don't want to change the job. I love it."

"How the job appears to someone else is not too important as long as we do a good job and as long as we do it honestly," says piano tuner Eugene Russell. "It's the real life. I don't see any possibility of separating my life from my work."

Theology in recent years has acknowledged the importance of storytelling. No one was better than Terkel. Don't misunderstand my tape recorder, he often said. His interviews are not transcriptions. Instead, Terkel devoted his career to coaxing a narrative out of the isolated events of a person's life. He creatively arranged pieces of this and that to make a story or better yet a song out of the ordinary struggles of work and family life.

Happenings

Mayor Mark Funkhouser is the presenter at the Breakfast Club on February 6, 2009. The Center for Spirit at Work (4310 Madison Ave. #204, Kansas City, MO 64111; www.centerforspiritatwork.org) is the host. Four other breakfast sessions, each featuring a CEO, will follow through June 5, 2009.

"Christ Our Hope: Healing a Broken World" is the theme for a February 22-25, 2009 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in the District of Columbia. The National Pastoral Life Center (18 Bleecker St., New York, NY 10012; www.catholicsocialministrygathering.org) acts as secretary for several groups who sponsor the annual event.

The Center for Corporate Citizenship (Boston College, 55 Lee Rd., Chestnut Hill, MA 02467; www.bccorporatecitizenship.org) hosts an international conference on “Corporate Citizenship: Leading Change, Managing Ambiguity” in San Francisco on March 29-31, 2009. Topics include Excellence for Community Involvement, Taking Employee Engagement Global, Recession Inspired Innovation, and the like.

The conference title reminds INITIATIVES of the student whose job interview seemingly hung on her tolerance for ambiguity. “Can you handle situations that are neither black nor white,” the interviewer asked? “Can you work on a project that might turn this way or that,” he pressed? Her answer? “Maybe yes; maybe no.” Smile.

Human Rights Watch (350 Fifth Ave. #3400, New York, NY 10118; www.hrw.org) debuts a film festival on June 11-25, 2009 in New York City. It will subsequently travel to Boston, London and San Francisco. HRW particularly seeks film entries from children under 19. HRW, by the way, is an excellent source of information on refugees, torture and related subjects.

Chesterton Academy (6800 Cedar Lake Rd., St. Louis Park, MN 55426; www.chestertonacademy.org) begins its second semester with a small number of ninth and 10th grade students focused on the liberal arts. The school will add students and grade levels, keeping tuition affordable (by private school standards). One caution: the Academy was launched because its leaders are not satisfied with Catholic high schools in their area. Why not then reform the Catholic high schools?

The Academy is named for British philosopher G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) and is informally affiliated with the American Chesterton Society (4117 Pebblebrook Cr., Minneapolis, MN 55437; www.chesterton.org). Members of the Society receive *Gilbert Magazine*.

A long profile of Chesterton appears in *The New Yorker* (4 Times Sq., New York, NY 10036; 7/14/08). Actually, when it applies to *The New Yorker*, “long profile” is redundant.

Websites

Corporate Accountability International (46 Plympton St., Boston, MA 02118; www.stopcorporateabuse.org) is the place to learn the latest about contaminated food, tobacco marketing, product safety and lots more. Several months ago CAI was a major player in successfully alerting people worldwide about dangerous baby formula.

INITIATIVES would like a single resource that details all the current consumer and worker boycotts. Is there such a website or publication?

ITEST (20 Archbishop May Dr. #3400, St. Louis, MO 63119; www.faithscience.org) has launched a website, Exploring the World, Discovering God (www.creationlens.org), for teachers in primary grades interested in the relationship between science and theology. The materials can be used in several subject areas and in any type of school. The site’s links include resources from multiple traditions.

It is just over 50 years since Cardinal Angelo Roncalli (1881-1963) was elected to be Pope John XXIII and it is exactly 50 years this month since he first “pronounce[d]...an ecumenical council for the universal church.” Blessed John XXIII later jotted in his diary that his fellow bishops initially responded to the announcement with “a devout and impressive silence.” Smile.

Only a few participants of John XXIII’s Vatican II are still alive. Among them is Bishop Remi DeRoo (www.remideroo.com) of Victoria, Canada. He is eager to share his memories and to discuss Vatican II’s implementation.

There will be Vatican II anniversary events and publications from now until at least 2015, 50 years after the close of the Council. INITIATIVES asks its readers to send along notices of talks, articles and the like.

Pope John XXIII was impressed by the United Nations’ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (2 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017; www.un.org/rights). He introduced its positive impulse to Catholic social thought. To honor the 60th anniversary of the *Universal Declaration, America* (106 W. 56th St., New York, NY 10019; 12/1/08) devoted several pages to its contemporary application.

Among the contributors to the *America* feature is National Center for the Laity friend Bob Senser, who edits *Human Rights for Workers* (<http://humanrightsforworkers.blogspot.com>).

The Solidarity Committee of the Capital District (33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210; www.solidaritycommittee.org) just celebrated its 25th anniversary. The Committee holds a monthly meeting, hosts occasional social events and participates in rallies. Its excellent newsletter, *Solidarity Notes*, keeps current on New York legislation, economic trends, and international issues. The newsletter is favorable toward Catholicism. For example, a recent edition had an item about Pope Benedict XVI and another about the Diocese of Albany's anti-poverty efforts.

The Catholic Worker (55 E. Third St., New York, NY 10003; www.catholicworker.org), founded by Peter Maurin (1877-1949) and Dorothy Day (1897-1980), completes its 75th anniversary celebration. Its "unofficial" website lists 93 Catholic Worker houses in the U.S. and a few in Canada and overseas. Each, in unique accents and different combinations, feeds and/or houses the unemployed, resists violent institutions through civil disobedience, convenes discussions about peace and justice, publishes a newspaper or newsletter, and gathers for worship. The website links to a bibliography about the movement.

An engaging book about the philosophers and saints who most influenced Maurin and Day, titled *The Catholic Worker Movement* by Mark & Louise Zwick, is available from National Center for the Laity (PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$22).

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NCL board members include Tom Donnelly, Bill Droel, John Hazard, Phil Moore, Terry Mambu Rasch, Lauren Sukal, Frosty Pipal and Vaile Scott (president).

Our NCL, an independent 501-C-3 organization, was chartered 31 years ago in the State of Illinois. NCL survives entirely on donations. "If money is your problem, send NCL your problem." Smile. See the back page of this newsletter for information about making your 2009 donation.

Free Advice to U.S. auto executives: Listen to your public relations department. If, however, they tell you to take private transportation to hearings regarding Federal relief for your company, fire the public relations department. If you perchance make another begging trip to Congress, consider chartering a dozen school buses. (Made in the U.S.) Invite some employees to ride along with you. Head south on Interstate 75, turn left.
