

Initiatives

In Support of Christians in the World

National Center for the Laity
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Taking the Initiative

In Banking

“It is the responsibility of the leaders of financial institutions—not their regulators, shareholders or other stakeholders—to create, oversee and imbue their organizations with an enlightened culture based on professionalism and integrity,” says Marcus Agius, chair of Barclays (1 Churchill Pl., London, England E14 5HP) in a letter to *Financial Times* (1 Southwark Bridge, London, England SE1 9HL; 9/28/10). Endorsed by 16 other bankers, the letter continues: “Through work we all seek to realize ourselves as people, provide for our dependants and make a contribution to the social good achieved through collective endeavor. The recovery of a stronger sense of service through reinforcement of a culture of professionalism will both benefit the financial service industry and those who work in it as well as furthering the common good.”

Agius is part of a reflection process coordinated by Archbishop Vincent Nichols (Vaughn House, 46 Francis St., London, England SW1P 1QN), Archbishop Peter Smith, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference and, on the banking side, Nick Anstee, departing Lord Mayor of London (Mansion House, London, England EC4N 8BH). The process began with several one-to-one relational meetings, followed by a series of small seminars. In October 2010 chairs of the largest banks, some bishops and civic leaders gathered for what Ben Andradi reports as “a landmark conference,” titled “Values and Trust in the City: Beyond Law and Regulation.”

Its theme, says Andradi, was “the cause of the recent failure of the banking system [as] not just a technical, regulatory failure but also an ethical and moral failure due to the operating culture of the banks.”

Several participants referred to *Love in Truth* by Pope Benedict XVI (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$6). Lord John McFall, for example, quoted the encyclical and said “moral relativism” makes it easier for amoral executives,

incompetent directors and irresponsible consumers to go on a “debt binge,” leading to financial crisis.

“A further expansion of regulation” cannot replace “the crisis of trust [within] the financial sector itself,” reflects Nichols. Cultivation of virtue is necessary to prevent further abuses and a worse financial situation. “The virtues are not about what one is allowed to do but who one is formed to be,” he says. (*The Tablet* [10/9/10 & 11/6/10], 1 King St. Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London, England W6 0GY)

In stressing self-correction the “Values and Trust” participants are in part reacting to recent regulations about executive bonuses and to a 2009 bonus tax. Their tone all the more necessitates an action step. Will financiers, individually and collectively, change their behavior? INITIATIVES awaits word.

Attention Readers

Thanks to all who generously responded to our Advent 2010 Appeal. Especially touching were the encouraging notes and expressions of prayer.

“This is a small check compared to the great work you do,” writes INITIATIVES’ reader Joseph Melton of California. “Thanks for the invitation to support your work... You represent to me a reason I have for being Catholic: to witness our role as Christians as leaven in the mass of society.”

For those who missed the NCL’s Advent Appeal, there is a donation form on the back page of this newsletter.

Taking the Initiative

Among Doctors

The Institute of Medicine (500 Fifth St. NW, Washington, DC 20001; www.iom.edu) recently issued 16 recommendations to avoid conflict of interest between doctors and drug companies. IOM wants full disclosure in the office, in labs and in publications.

Other professional groups for doctors use other approaches. Several societies, for

example, no longer allow corporate sponsorship of their meetings and do not allow display tables at conferences to distribute gifts.

The American Medical Association (515 N. State St., Chicago, IL 60654; www.ama-assn.org) advocates disclosure but also tells members to refuse gifts that do not benefit patients, refuse all gifts worth more than \$100 and refuse all pharmaceutical stock when doing research.

Steven Nissen (Cleveland Clinic, 9500 Euclid Ave. #J23, Cleveland, OH 44195) leads a group of doctors who challenge all medical committees to adopt a *zero dollar* policy. A sponsor can buy an ad in a journal and distribute literature at a conference—but nothing else: no pens, no tote bags, no meal vouchers, nothing. In particular, the group says anyone writing practice guidelines can have no financial influence from a company.

Jerome Kassirer (Tufts School of Medicine, 145 Harrison Ave., Boston, MA 02111; www.tufts.edu) sounds the same note. Doctors are to “take nothing from industry—nothing,” he writes in *On the Take* (Oxford University Press [2005], 198 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016; \$19.99).

A recent study underscores widespread practice among doctors accepting gifts, meals and trips from companies. About 84% take such things. The number is down from 94% five years ago. Is that progress? (*Chicago Tribune*, 11/8/10 & *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 8/29/10 plus *Archives of Internal Medicine* [11/10] & *American Medical News* [5/11/09] & *JAMA* [4/1/09], all at 515 N. State St., Chicago IL 60654)

Pew Prescription Project (901 E St. NW, Washington DC 20004; www.prescriptionproject.org) is a resource for patients on this topic.

While applauding those doctors who improve guidelines within their associations, our National Center for the Laity realizes that most doctors deal with ethical issues in isolation. Thus INITIATIVES looks for support groups in which doctors can explore the meaning of their work.

UCC Physicians Network (87 Reynolds Mill Rd., York, PA 17403; www.ucc.org/justice/health) helps physicians address “issues of mutual interest and concern.” It also meets “some of the unique spiritual needs of physicians who are part of the United Church of Christ.”

Are there other support networks or groups?

Taking the Initiative In Public Policy

“There is no such thing as society,” Margaret Thatcher, British prime minister from 1979-1990, once said. Now, by contrast, Prime Minister David Cameron and others are promoting “Big Society”—an appreciation for intermediate institutions like coops, churches, community organizations and local charities as buffers against bureaucratic government and the individualistic marketplace. This approach can break the impasse between the left and right, its supporters say, thus enabling effective public policy coalitions.

Commentators connect the concept to Catholic social thought. Member of Parliament Greg Clark, among others, specifically point to *subsidiarity*—the Catholic principle that says decisions should be made as close as possible to those affected by the decision.

Some Big Society enthusiasts use the phrase *third way*. It is, says John Milbank of University of Nottingham, different from “an idolatry of the state and absolute autonomy of the sovereign individual... [a way] between the dominance of the state and dominance of market.”

Big Society is a promising idea. However, a third way that truly values civil society is not “a matter of magical technical devices” or using a new structure here and there, Milbank cautions. It is “different virtuous practices, different habits.” A responsive society requires virtuous people whose mediating institutions likewise nurture virtue. But can a secular place like England consciously embrace virtues in its policies? Will it really encourage churches and mosques to promote virtue?

The Big Society concept cannot merely shrink programs and leave individuals to fend for themselves, further cautions columnist Clifford Longley. The principle of subsidiarity “has a twin, the principle of *solidarity*.” (*The Tablet* [3/13, 3/20, 8/7, 9/11 & 10/2/10], 1 King St. Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London, England W6 0GY)

With its tradition of vibrant voluntary associations the U.S. might seem receptive to a Big Society approach. Themes like *new voluntarism*, *new Federalism*, *thousand points of light* and *faith-based initiatives* have indeed circulated in presidential administrations going back 45 years. Yet in practice these gestures toward society have often been packaged with

reducing some government services and turning others over to private business. As Msgr. George Higgins (1916-2002) warns: “Subsidiarity does not say *government is best which governs least*. It says *not everything governmental has to be government delivered*.”

How can it occur in the U.S.?

Taking the Initiative *On Marriage*

Each of three new reports furnishes disturbing overlays to the growing decline in the U.S. marriage rate.

First, education levels are strongly associated with the marriage rate. College graduates are inclined to marry; but nearly 50% of those lacking a college degree choose not to marry—an even higher percentage among younger non-college people.

Second, it follows that the unmarried are poor or working class. And those working class couples who marry have a higher divorce rate. By contrast, the married are upwardly mobile and these marriages of college-educated couples are increasingly more durable.

Third, the children of unmarried people have more health problems, more delinquency and lower grades in school than those of married couples. (*The Decline of Marriage and Rise of New Families*, Pew Research Center, 1615 L St. NW #700, Washington, DC 20036; www.pewresearch.org and *When Marriage Disappears*, National Marriage Project, PO Box 400766, Charlottesville, VA 22904; www.virginia.edu/marriageproject and *Fragile Families*, Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036; www.brookings.edu)

These findings disrupt stereotypes, says columnist Ross Douthat in *N.Y. Times* (12/6/10). The more highly educated, it turns out, value and maintain a stable home life even though they are pegged as cultural liberals. Reading deeper into the reports he finds a more startling reality: It is not that the working class believes in traditional values and yet has trouble adhering to those values. The under-educated actually “have become more permissive” in their lifestyle beliefs. A growing number of them (nearly 40%) say “the whole notion of marriage is obsolete.” The percentage is higher among working class young adults. Their behavior matches their opinion. Meanwhile, college graduates are becoming more socially conservative (both in

opinion and behavior) on matters like premarital sex and divorce.

While young adults continue to stay away from church, the trend is greater in the working class. The college educated (evangelical, mainline and Catholic) are filing into pews, admittedly in small numbers. (*American Grace* by Robert Putnam and David Campbell, Simon & Schuster [2010], 1230 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 10020; \$30)

Archbishop Joseph Kurtz (Chancery Office, PO Box 1073, Louisville, KY 40201) correctly names a major part of the problem: The wrong assumption that marriage is just a lifestyle choice, but not necessarily a public good. Marriage, he insists, “will always be personal, but it is not private.” (*Our Sunday Visitor* [12/12/10], 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750)

Kurtz and other church leaders desire a higher marriage rate and greater marital fidelity. Another round of Church-produced videos and pamphlets is not enough, however. A pro-marriage strategy, the research suggests, might be for the whole church to double the efforts to prepare working-class high school students for college, to get them into college and to assist in their retention. Catholicism uniquely has an infrastructure for such an effort.

Taking the Initiative *On Campus*

After months of one-to-one relational meetings, 22 workers for Aramark (1101 Market St., Philadelphia, PA 19107; www.aramark.com) approached management to request neutrality during their effort to organize food service workers at Loyola University, Chicago. Aramark agreed. The committee then presented their case to students and community leaders. In support of the workers one Loyola student quotes a Jesuit motto: “To be a person for others committed to a just world.”

The organizing committee conducted a vote among fellow employees. In November they returned to management with a sufficient number of union cards; their union, affiliated with Unite Here (55 W. Van Buren St. #500, Chicago, IL 60605; www.unitehere1.org) is now recognized.

The 180 workers at eight Loyola cafeterias and cafes include some students, including Jesse Kadjo who is a social justice graduate student of your INITIATIVES’ editor. The workers will negotiate staffing policies and

wages, she says. “We seek more participation in the work process.” (*The Loyola Phoenix* [10/6, 10/20, 11/10 & 12/1/10], 820 N. Michigan Ave. #Centennial LL28, Chicago, IL 60611)

Meanwhile, INITIATIVES hears from another Catholic college whose leaders are unclear about church doctrine on unions. To help them and others INITIATIVES recommends *Catholic Administrators and Labor Unions* (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$3). Based on the experiences of managers, the booklet answers: To whom does Catholic doctrine apply? What is allowed? What behavior is immoral? What is the responsibility of unions and individual workers?

Taking the Initiative

Assisting the Unemployed

Between Jobs Ministry (St. John Fisher, 10234 S. Washtenaw Ave., Chicago, IL 60655) is a Sunday morning support group. It also regularly hosts evening sessions on specific aspects of unemployment.

The nearby Beverly Hills Job Club (St. Barnabas, 10134 S. Longwood Dr., Chicago, IL 60643) hosts support meetings on the second and fourth Thursdays at 7 P.M.

Meanwhile, Interfaith Worker Justice (1020 W. Bryn Mawr, Chicago, IL 60660; www.iwj.org) coordinates the Faith Advocates for Jobs campaign. It networks support groups for the unemployed and encourages formation of more of them. There are educational resources through the website. Rev. Paul Sherry of Washington (psherry@iwj.org) is heading the campaign’s public policy effort around job creation.

Work & Art

Some months ago INITIATIVES printed John Lanchester’s contention that work is not represented in literature today, except in a superficial and predictable way. He contrasts this with the late 1800s when novelists and reporters thoroughly described work environments as part of a person’s character and the setting. (*The Daily Telegraph*, 1/29/10)

Thus INITIATIVES is pleased to see *Working Words: Punching the Clock and Kicking Out the Jams* edited by M.L. Liebler (Coffee House Press [2010], 79 13th Ave. NE #110, Minneapolis, MN 55413; \$22).

This 540-page book contains over 120 “labor poems and songs” like *Closed Mill*, *Assembly Room Women*, *Telephone Repairman*, *Groundskeeper Busted Reading in a Custodial Closet* and *Prayer from a Picket Line* by Fr. Daniel Berrigan, SJ. Then, there are 20 pieces of short fiction and ten of “nonfiction, histories and memoirs,” including two excerpts by Dorothy Day (1897-1980).

INITIATIVES asks its readers to send along titles of recent novels and essays in which work plays a significant part.

North American Spirituality

Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1927-2003)

“Culture is back on the poverty research agenda,” write David Harding et al. in an introduction for *The Annals* (American Academy of Political and Social Science, 2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91320; 5/10). The topic and particularly the phrase *culture of poverty* have been taboo for over 40 years. Yet each of *The Annals’* ten articles treats a specific dimension of culture’s bearing on poverty and the authors cite other recent publications that do the same.

The controversy around this topic stems from a 1965 report, *The Negro Family: the Case for National Action* (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20210; www.dol.gov) principally written by Moynihan. In this report and elsewhere Moynihan argued that “minority families were breaking up under economic and social pressure” and “that the breakup of poor black families contributed to the spread of crime and unrest [and other problems] in the cities,” explains Steven Weisman in his introduction to *Daniel Patrick Moynihan: A Portrait in Letters of an American Visionary* (Public Affairs [2010], 250 W. 57th St. #1321, New York, NY 10107; \$30). For his observations on what he called *a tangle of pathology*, Moynihan “was attacked as a racist” and accused of *blaming the victim*, causing others to shy away.

Moynihan’s own father permanently abandoned the family when he was ten years old, says Weisman. That trauma became “the psychological basis for his deep lifelong commitment to defining family stability as a key to society’s success.” Perhaps because of his experience, Moynihan never moralized about other people’s lifestyle nor did he believe that poverty was inevitable.

Likewise today, reports Patricia Cohen (*N.Y. Times*, 10/18/10), “social scientists are rejecting the notion of a monolithic and unchanging culture of poverty.” They do not “attribute destructive attitudes and behavior...to inherent moral character.” Culture is understood as “a shared perception” in a neighborhood or area; it is a view of how the world works. The perception is based on experience, but it can limit its adherents as they try to make their way in the wider world of education, careers, family life, social services and more.

Moynihan thought paternalistic government actually contributed to a culture or worldview that confined people to poverty. It is important to remember, however, that he was not against assistance per se. In fact, as a U.S. senator in 1996 he defiantly opposed the elimination of AFDC-style welfare.

For thorough treatment of Moynihan’s 1965 report see *Freedom Is Not Enough* by James Patterson (Basic Books [2010], 387 Park Ave. S., New York, NY 10016; \$26.95).

Moynihan is associated with ethnicity, race and domestic policy. His interests were, however, wide-ranging, including thorough knowledge of Russia and other foreign places, plus ahead-of-the-time ideas about climate and the environment. He was a pioneer in auto safety, bringing Ralph Nader to Washington. Moynihan was an expert advocate for urban beautification and a proponent of improved metro public transit. Ground was broken in October 2010 for a large annex to Manhattan’s Penn Station, to be completed in 2016 and called Moynihan Station.

Moynihan’s insistence that effective anti-poverty efforts must consider attitudes and habits is crucial during recovery from the current recession and in the years to come.

120 Years

Of Catholic Social Thought

Why do so few people in the U.S. accept Catholic social teaching about the market, business, and politics? Because, writes Fr. John Coleman, SJ, Catholic teaching and three elements of U.S. culture are largely incompatible. One element is consumerism--putting a higher value on *having* over *being*, at an environmental cost of producing too much and disposing of so much waste.

The second is individualism--giving priority to your self at the exclusion of others.

“The unencumbered individual as an autonomous chooser, cut off from essential relationality” is a dominant theme in U.S. culture, he says. This is “diametrically opposed to the Catholic understanding of the human person as profoundly and essentially relational.”

The third is a “romance” with technology, which “stresses means, technique, [and] procedure...rather than substance and goals.” The combination of these three produces wariness toward Catholic social teaching on the common good and human solidarity.

“In short,” says Coleman, U.S. “culture is not the most congenial possible setting for CST.”

Nevertheless, U.S. Catholics have made noteworthy contributions to the development of Catholic doctrine, he adds, citing as an example the pioneering work of Cardinal James Gibbons (1834-1921) of Baltimore in coming to the defense of workers and their efforts to organize.

Coleman, who participated in our National Center for the Laity’s founding convention, tracks the mixed record of the bishops’ conference in taking timely public policy positions. He gives high praise to two very influential bishops’ pastoral statements: in 1983 *The Challenge of Peace* (USCCB, 3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20017; www.usccb.org/sdwp) and in 1986 *Economic Justice for All* (available through Office of Social Justice, 328 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55102; www.osjspm.org).

A “unique process” causes those two documents to stand out. Before publication, the bishops widely conducted hearings among experts (secular and religious) and circulated drafts for discussion and feedback. One beneficial result was to introduce policy elites, the media and the public to CST—perhaps for the first time. Since 2001 no U.S. bishops’ teachings have a participatory process, Coleman concludes in *Catholic Social Teaching in Global Perspective* edited by Fr. Daniel McDonald, SJ (Orbis Books [2010], PO Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545; \$26).

Meanwhile, the dominant worldview in the U.S. leaves many people unsatisfied. Is there a way that Catholic principles can be attractively presented to young adult Catholics and others, while respecting the beauty of U.S. pluralism?

Rest in Peace

Ron Santo (1940-2010)

“*Santo, santo, santo*” (Italian for *saint*), shouted the crowd gathered in St. Peter’s Square upon hearing of Pope John Paul II’s (1920-2005) death. They were recalling a long ago process whereby people were canonized by popular acclamation.

During a Cubs game a day or two after the pontiff’s funeral Pat Hughes of WGN Radio mentioned that a crowd in Rome had been yelling for his broadcast partner. As Hughes and every listener could predict, Santo took the bait and asked *why?* Hughes, through the inning, used the joke to pay tribute to both the pope and the All Star third baseman.

Santo is acclaimed for raising awareness around juvenile diabetes, a disease from which he suffered. Through his Walk for a Cure and other ventures, he constantly raised money for Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (26 Broadway #1400, New York, NY 10004; www.jdrf.org).

There is a Hall of Fame at the intersection of New York routes 28 and 80. Santo is inducted into a better Hall of Fame—now and eternally *santo, santo, santo*.

Happenings

The Pitmen Painters by Lee Hall (who also wrote *Billy Elliot*) is currently being performed at Manhattan Theater Club (261 W. 47th St., New York, NY 10036; www.mtc-nyc.org). It is based on a book, *Pitmen Painters: the Ashington Group* by William Feaver (Northumbria University Press [1988], Ellison Pl., Newcastle upon Tyne, England NE1 8ST; \$25).

For 50 years, beginning in the 1930s, miners in northern England participated in an art appreciation class plus they painted and exhibited their own art. The play’s characters are composites of real workers. “*The Pitman Players* is most alive when the paintings hold center stage and the characters frame them with words,” writes Roberta Smith (*N.Y. Times*, 11/25/10).

The annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering is February 13-16, 2011 in Washington, DC. More information: Department of Social Development and World Peace (USCCB, 3211 fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20017; www.usccb.org/sdwp).

Peacemaking in a Culture of Violence is the title of the March 1-4, 2011 gathering of Congress on Urban Ministry (SCUPE, 200 N. Michigan Ave. #502, Chicago, IL 60601; www.congressonurbanministry.org). Among the speakers are biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann, author of *The Prophetic Imagination* (Augsburg Fortress [1978], 4001 Gantz Rd. E., Grove City, OH 43123; \$19) and Chicago’s own Fr. Mike Pflieger, subject of *Radical Disciple* by Bob McClory (Chicago Review Press [2010], 814 N. Franklin St., Chicago, IL 60610; \$24.95).

Catholic Social Teaching and World Poverty is the latest in a series of conferences, March 21-23, 2011, at Villanova University (800 Lancaster Ave. #Corr Hall, Villanova, PA 19085; www.villanova.edu/mission).

Our National Center for the Laity (PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629) will co-sponsor a March 24-26, 2011 conference: Celebrating 120 Years Since *Rerum Novarum* (the document that began modern Catholic social thought). The Center for Social Concerns (1212 Geddes Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556; <http://bit.ly/NDCSTconference>) is the convener; the University of Notre Dame is the site. More details soon.

American Catholic Council (PO Box 3106, Barrington, IL 60010; www.americancatholiccouncil.org) convenes in Detroit, June 10-12, 2011. It will “recall the promise of Vatican II for a renaissance of the roles and responsibilities of the baptized through a relationship between church and the world.”

Mayslake Ministries (450 E. 22nd St. #170, Lombard, IL 60148; www.mayslakeministries.org), a longtime facilitator of spiritual growth opportunities for workers, regularly sponsors a veterans’ retreat. Mayslake is also a co-sponsor of a summer benefit concert for the armed forces.

Websites, Blogs and Resources

Newspaper reporter Tom Rivers decided to base his series about migrant farm work in experience. He took jobs at 13 farms near his home in the New York State region between Buffalo and Rochester. He describes harvesting cabbage, fruit and other products alongside

workers from the Caribbean and elsewhere in *Farm Hands: Hard Work and Hard Lessons* (Burlingham Books [2010], 2 S. Main St., Perry, NY 14530; \$13.95).

Conference of Major Superiors of Men (8808 Cameron St., Silver Spring, MD 20910; www.cmsm.org/documents) posts *Papal Teachings on Economic Justice*, including a timely section about “The Bible on Distributive and Social Justice.”

The Working Catholic is a new blog by INITIATIVES’ editor Bill Droel. It appears at www.chicagocatholicnews.com and irregularly at www.chicagounionnews.com. Droel’s twice-monthly *View from the Hill* column is in the Views section of www.mvccglacier.com.

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www.catholiclabor.org) hosts the web
version of INITIATIVES at
www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm.

Please send INITIATIVES newspaper clips,
web citations, bulletin announcements,
meeting notices and all other information
pertaining to faith and work. INITIATIVES
is inter-active; in the same way that the
National Center for the Laity is a network
that exists, not in a small attic office near
Midway Airport, but out among its
supporters.

Board Members of NCL include Tom
Donnelly, Bill Droel, John Hazard, Phil
Moore, Terry Mambu Rasch, Vince
Rougeau, Lauren Sukal, Frosty Pipal and
Vaile Scott (president). The NCL is an
independent 501-C-3 organization,
incorporated in Illinois in 1978. NCL relies
entirely on donations. Its audited financial
report is available upon request.

“There is nothing more useful than to look at
the world as it really is.” –Pope Leo XIII in
On the Condition of Workers (1891)